A
PRIMER
of
MODERN ART

by SHELDON CHENEY

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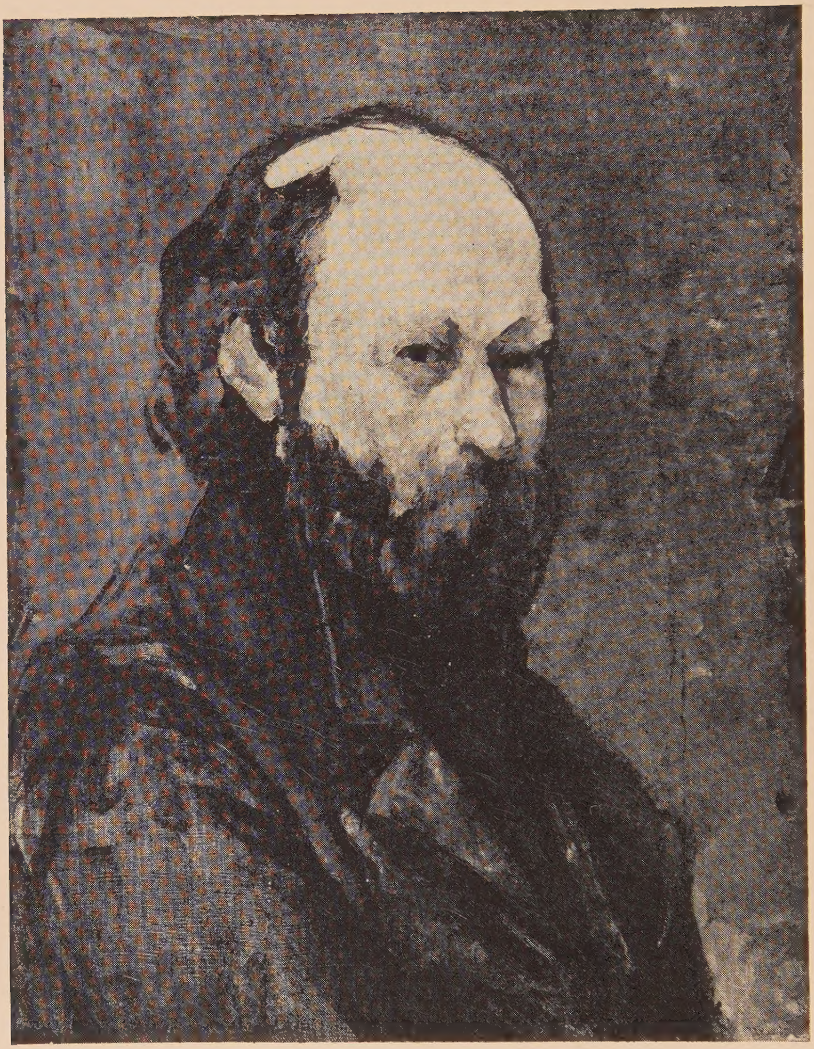

SELF-PORTRAIT, BY PAUL CEZANNE
(IN THE PHILLIPS MEMORIAL GALLERY)

C421p

A PRIMER OF MODERN ART

BY

SHELDON CHENEY

With 179 Illustrations

SEVENTH EDITION
REVISED AND ENLARGED
With 44 New Illustrations and an Added Bibliography

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FOREWORD

IN thus rushing in where angels fear to tread, I hope to evade some part of the possible consequences by entering a disavowal here at the very start: I had no intention of trying to write either an exhaustive or in any sense a final book on modern art. My hold on the subject is as sketchy as might be expected of one who has gone out frankly to enjoy and not to study art works; my lists are largely records of personal contacts with artists or chance meetings with their works in exhibitions; my background in history and theory is about that of any minor worker in one of the arts who also writes an occasional journalistic article. Under such circumstances an exhaustive and scholarly treatise is an impossibility. As for finality, modernism is too much alive, too multifold, too fluid, for anyone really interested to try to stop the current and think about histories and authoritative rankings. It is the sense of aliveness and flow, more than anything else, that I have wanted to convey.

I have chosen the Primer method—and title—because it seemed to me that what we need most, to widen appreciation of contemporary creative art, is to escape for a while from High Learning and get back to a child's directness of approach. Without trying to point out didactically what to see in individual works, without trying to add anything to them—you remember how the art-companion books ruthlessly chase down the last hidden meaning in a canvas—a Primer might, quite simply, lead on the interested but often puzzled Progressive Citizen, until he found himself on intimate emotional terms with modern art, with just enough of background knowledge to make him feel at ease in such new surroundings. That and nothing more is my hope for the present volume.

I am not interested in putting forward or defending a Cause. There the modernist works are, themselves, for enjoyment. Being creative, they need no excuse, defense or pushing forward. But even while trying to keep that point in mind, I have probably turned dogmatic about some things that in the nature of art cannot be settled. Most of all, I have misgivings that I may have emphasized too insistently the idea of a search for form as the norm of the modern movement, when my better judgment tells me that artists very seldom crystallize any theory, or search for anything consciously. Remember, please, that the critic has an evil tendency to narrow things in, nail them down—and in your own mind make allowances, keep the border-lines fluid.

As for the usual foreword acknowledgments, that matter boils down chiefly to cordial thanks to Mr. John Quinn, who has allowed me to see and enjoy his extraordinary collection of modern paintings and sculptures, and who has thrown light on certain phases of the movement which I did not know at first hand. I have become indebted in lesser measure to many people along the way, for services too various for mention here—but the book itself must be the answer to their kindness. I must add, however, that I not only have quoted in proper fashion from Willard Huntington Wright's *Modern Painting: Its Tendency and Meaning*, but have doubtless put his ideas into my own words occasionally without any credit line—for which I acknowledge indebtedness (or guilt) here. I suspect that Clive Bell and Ezra Pound might find a pat phrase lifted here and there from their critical works, if they read the book thoroughly—although I have tried to give them due credit in the text. The list of illustrations is placed at the back of the volume, and I have made acknowledgments there to those who have courteously supplied photographs. Alfred Stieglitz, to whom everyone interested in modern art becomes indebted sooner or later, has helped me particularly with illustrations.

No large part of this book has been published in magazine pages; but portions of several chapters have been rewritten from articles that appeared originally in *The International Studio*, *Theatre Arts Magazine*, *Century Magazine*, *Shadowland*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. The editors of these publications have kindly given their permission to reprint. I have also incorporated paragraphs out of a pamphlet, entitled *Modern Art and the Theatre*, which I printed and published two years ago. It achieved such a remarkably limited circulation that I am sure this reprinting of extracts cannot be considered unethical.

And so I put my Primer before you, hoping only that it will serve to wipe clean some of the accumulated stains on your art-seeing spectacles, or that it may, in a sense, help you to find new eyes.

S. C.

October, 1923.

DRAWING BY FERNAND LEGER

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NOTE ON THE REVISED (SEVENTH) EDITION

It is a pleasure, and an encouragement, to find that a seventh edition of *A Primer of Modern Art* is called for, only eight years after first publication. Twice in that period minor changes have been effected in the text. On this occasion, however, I have carefully reconsidered every statement, attempting to shape the volume more fully to its purpose of leading the layman to an understanding, a pleasurable appreciation, of modern art. In general the changes consist in a revision of the phraseology, and an enriching of the illustrative material, both pictorial and descriptive. About forty new plates have been added or substituted. My own conception of what constitutes "modern" art has been clarified, I believe, by continued contacts in the several art centers of the Western world: my work in the last six years has taken me across America and about Europe repeatedly, and I have had exceptional opportunity to study manifestations of the new creative spirit, from California to Moscow.

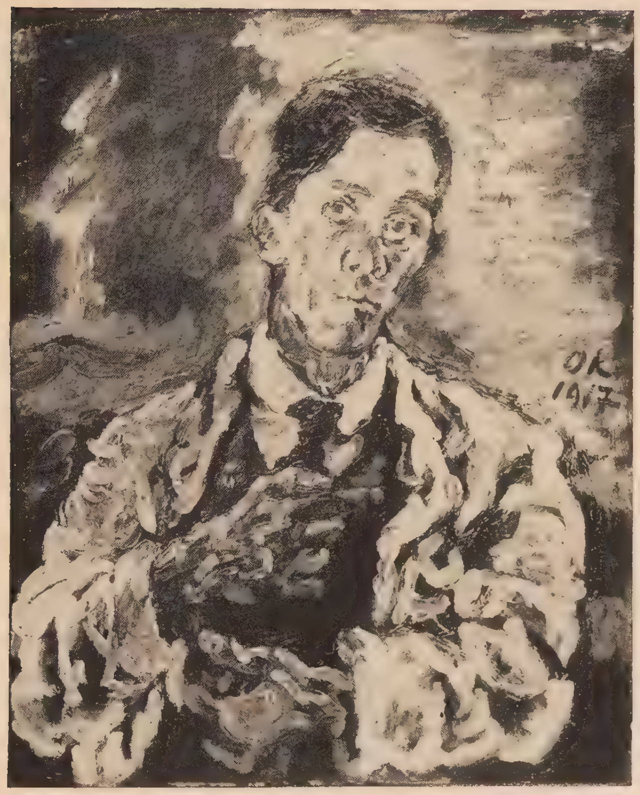
In one direction Modernism has moved so fast in eight years that a half chapter had to be taken out bodily. In architecture, what was revolutionary, generally decried and exceptional when I first planned the book is now widely appreciated, widely practiced, and generally recognized as the beginning of a "style" for the future. The tentative treatment of the subject in earlier editions now gives place to a chapter entitled—not too confidently, I believe—"The New Architecture." Elsewhere additions to the text cover developments like the "school" of Sur-Realist painters in Paris, the extraordinary spread of Expressionistic painting and sculpture in the United States and Mexico, and the expansion of the arts under the Soviets in Russia.

S. C.

Berkeley, California. January, 1932.

I

THE APPROACH TO MODERN ART



SELF-PORTRAIT, BY OSKAR KOKOSCHKA

THIS is an example of Modern Art. It is a good example: it has all the Earmarks. It is not in the least photographic. Almost any student of drawing could copy the outlines and shading of the man's head and hands more *naturally*. It is not prettily finished—indeed, it is very rough. Lovers of Whistler, Sargent and Zorn will find its technique deplorable. One would say that this painter Kokoschka had never heard of Greek Purity. He seems to have left out everything that makes art diverting and pretty. He has abandoned those very things that we all were so carefully taught to look for in paintings: sentiment, polish, literary interest, likeness, charm.

A great many pictures of this rough sort are being painted today. There must be many people who appreciate and buy them, who are willing to overlook the lack of prettiness in a painting. Otherwise the artists could not afford to keep on making them, and there would not have been the enormous increase in the number of modernist painters and modernist exhibitions that we have witnessed during the last decade. Where so very many art-lovers have become interested, it hardly seems likely that they *all* are insane. It is just possible that they are finding something in these paintings that the rest of us have overlooked: that Kokoschka and his fellow artists have hidden something in the canvas that is more important to them than diverting subject-matter or polished technique. Even plain people very like ourselves are beginning to prefer Matisse, Picasso, Kokoschka and Derain to the more normal painters—people who admit that they get a sort of ecstasy from music or from standing in the Sainte Chapelle, and thrills from the early Greek sculptures, and a pleasant feeling from the stream-lines of an automobile. It is all very confusing. We are taught that one thing is art—and then people don't stick to it.

Let me right out with it: Not to be able to appreciate Kokoschka's paintings, just because they seem rough and unphotographic, argues plain Ignorance. Continued dislike of modern art, in the face of all that has been written about it and after all the exhibitions of the last ten years, simply indicates a case of bigotry—stubborn adherence to a set notion of what art is, and blind refusal to open the mind to a new thing that is coming as surely as death or taxes.

Now please don't think that I am setting up as less ignorant than you on most questions. God forbid that I should so forget my place. But in this one little matter of art appreciation I have worked myself out of something that I look back to as a sort of prison. I should like to help clear the way for you, take down a bar or two, help you to blow some of the dust off your mind.

I will add—what may or may not be a comfort to you—that if you are one of the ignorant ones, it is probably because you are highly educated. For education, as administered, is calculated to kill out of every human being whatever creative ability and free love of beauty the God of art and life has endowed us with. It is training to a formula that makes the Average Citizen resist vigorously any disturbing of the dust coat. Education is busy putting ideas into set places. Having ceased long ago to live with art, you probably learned all about it, and now you want it to stay in its set place. You even feel irritated when it changes its pigeonhole, alters its dress or its form, or appears in a guise that puzzles you.

The chances are you were taught a formula built on two specific ideas: first, that art is imitation, that one must look primarily for likeness to a model in nature; second, that art must be "finished," refined, a sort of technical display. These two cardinal virtues of the centuries-long realistic era in painting have been called by many names: Truth and Purity, Exalted Subject and Exalted Technique, etc. These were the idols, the obsession, of correct 19th Century painting and sculpture.

Just here I may be able to help you to overcome the disadvantages of your education, by suggesting that you were trained to a superstition and not to a fact. I can report to you with all the confidence in the world that those idols have been overthrown. The modernists have discovered that both correct representation and technical dexterity can be relegated to a subordinate place, and the soul of great art still be attained. They have made clear, moreover, that it was over-emphasis on the imitative element, upon representation as an end in itself, that brought the world to such a sterile time in the arts during the 19th Century. The whole fallacy is summed up in *realism.* I cannot do better, in trying to help you to an understanding of modernism, than to point out the devastating effect the realistic movement had on the arts as a whole. Consider the art world's utter obsession with imitation, through centuries, and how it led to the reign of Naturalism in literature—and that we are still in that bondage. Remember how it brought observance of the removed-fourth-wall convention in the theatre, resulting in our peephole playhouse. Consider how it brought about the limitation of architecture to echoes of recognized and accredited historic styles, until the race of those who once were the Builders of the world is almost extinct, and in its place a generation of timid, devitalized, cultured designers. And finally consider how dreadfully long was the reign of photographic realism in painting, sculpture and the visual arts generally—so that there existed no major artist in those fields for generations and generations. Through all that period an artist's originality consisted of swinging to a classic extreme if the romantics were in vogue, or to a naturalistic extreme if the neo-classics were in vogue, or to an escape into

ON THE BALL, BY PICASSO

romantic-sentimental pastures when the realist began to pall—all these things being limited in vision to what a man could see on the outside of nature with his eye.

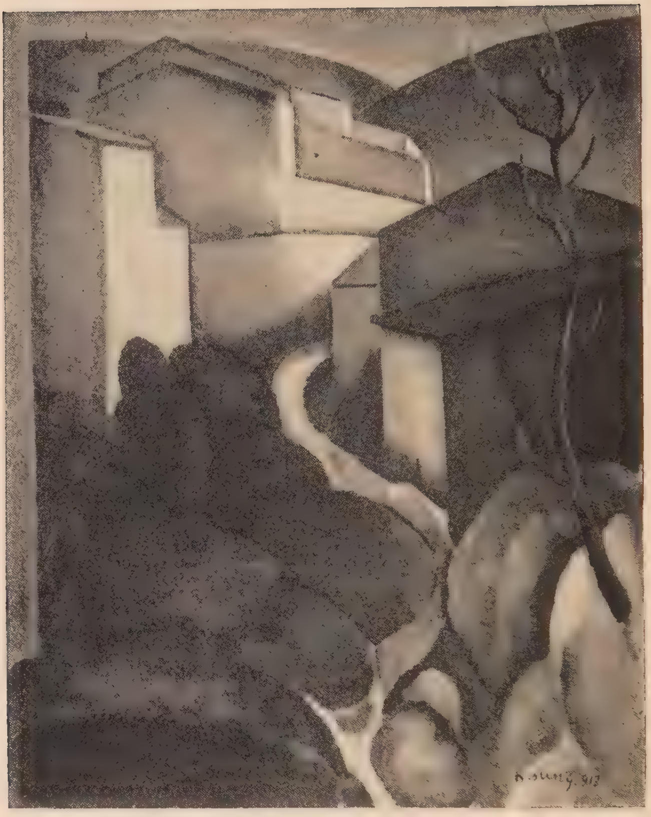
The public—if one may borrow that pretentious name for the comparatively few people who trouble at all about art—were helped to an acceptance of this fraud, of a sort of photography masquerading as art, by the confounding of creative art and *illustration.* In the last fifty years illustrated books and magazines have become so cheap and all-pervading that "pictures" go daily into almost every home in the land. The people have come to love these things, doubtless for good enough reasons, and they have been misled into believing that that love constitutes a taste for art. Naturally illustration is imitative. It pleases first of all by the exactness and neatness with which it imitates. I hope to show that art is of a different order of experience.

We have the perfect example of this sort of corruption here in America, where the weekly *Saturday Evening Post* has, I believe, upward of two million circulation, and its imitators many millions more. Its illustrations, as illustrations, are often remarkably good. Its cover design, for instance, is likely to be an amusing anecdote in color, a sentimental likeness of the insipid "magazine girl," a clever simplified photograph of a boy in mischief, the Ole Swimmin' Hole, Rover, Kitty, Old Dobbin, Great Granny, etc., etc. There probably never was one of these covers that had a creative flicker in it—and yet millions on millions of people know them as "art." (Does not the astute magazine publisher give color to the idea by listing an "Art Editor" in the staff column?)

The example may be a bit extreme. But only by looking back on the phenomenon of the spread of illustration are we likely to understand how a primarily imitative activity all but usurped the name and place of art over a considerable period of history and almost throughout the Western world. And if the example really is extreme, one can only reflect that the insidious poison worked hardly less thoroughly in many other directions than the magazines. Many a canvas out of the Metropolitan Museum of Art would make a perfect *Saturday Evening Post* cover. That is the thing we must recognize: journalistic art pervades our galleries, is expounded by the college professors, is discussed seriously at the women's clubs, was set up as a model for you in your schoolbooks. A whole false standard of values has been given the sanction of authority.

One feels the more compunction in attempting to pull down some of these traditional barriers to an enjoyment of modern art, because it means doing away with much that people have come to love in the trusting belief that it is art. But let us consider separately and successively those qualities in a painting which have been most esteemed, most loved, in the realistic illustrative era: intriguing subject-matter, sentiment, perfect likeness, and technical dexterity.

If one believes, as many of us do, that art is primarily a *creative* activity on the part of the artist, that it is one of the few ways in which divinity is constantly reasserting itself, that it has its own peculiar way of giving us pleasure, of bringing us to ecstasy, by the conveying of a definite æsthetic emotion, then one must soon come to realize that the choice of subject-matter is of secondary importance. To picture the parting of lovers, the gray-haired patriot with the flag, the sweet babe, the wrecked ship in an angry sea, Diana's chaste bath, death, marriage, etc., etc., is to add a literary element which simply has nothing to do with the fundamental problem in hand. To ask a painting or statue to tell a story or convey a sentiment by association of ideas is a perversion of the function of those works of art. Subject-matter is somehow an inseparable part of the completed picture, and there must be a linking with life, but the heart of creative work really lies beyond subject-interest, beyond picturesqueness, sentiment and slices of life.



LANDSCAPE WITH STREAM, BY KISLING

It also lies beyond cleverness of transcription, beyond illusion. The photographic element, the factor that makes a picture beloved for its "perfect likeness," is equally incidental. No doubt a painting skilfully done can go farther than photography in getting a transcribed image; but if it does, it abandons its artistic function. The spectator admiring it for either its cleverness of exact imitation or the conveyed natural beauty or charm or caressableness is simply using art to tickle some itchy spot in his emotional anatomy.

As for the finish, the polish, so esteemed for several generations back, it simply came to be valued because it was not clear what *was* the real value of painting and sculpture if that wasn't it. If a painting had no artistic depth, the painter might get by with a show of technical dexterity, a blinding virtuosity. The masculine brush-swinging of Sargent is no less of this sort than is the sweetly feminine tender brushing of a Bouguereau or a Leighton.

These all are adventitious values—literary or dramatic subject-matter, photographic cleverness, technical display. They are earmarks of a *phase* in art history, and it happens to be the least inventive, the least emotional, almost the dullest of all phases.

There are those who, having discovered so much, urge that the contemporary artist should throw to the winds everything that has been gained in recent art practice, and so accomplish a return to the primitive or archaic—back to the well-springs where art flows pure and strong and unspoiled. A healthy thing it would be, too; getting the stuffy breath of the studio out of the lungs of their understanding, sniffing a bit of free urge to expression, getting the feel of creation. But not so fast, my child! That sort of regression is—perhaps fortunately—impossible. The developing of a modern art, with the authentic universal art-appeal in it, and typical of these intense times, is not merely a matter of sailing away to savage isles. Gauguin gained much of freedom and something of fresh beauty in that way, and we all thank him for it. But his was hardly more than a little side-stream of the modern art current, which certainly could not develop impetus enough for a world movement; the other primitives of modernism are of a different sort. We have come upon a fallacy here—the Primitive or Child-Art fallacy.

It is futile indeed to talk of getting back to a simple primitivism. It is as illogical as trying to reconstruct the modern economic world without machinery. Industry has become a part of life, and the machine is indispensable to industry. The machine will enslave us only so long as most men have slave-minds. The enriched means of the modern painter create new opportunities for him, and the accumulated tradition of painting and sculpture constitutes a legacy through which the modern artist should arrive at a greater freedom and creative intensity. He merely has enslaved himself to photography and a set of bewhiskered rules. He needs badly the tonic of mental regression, to restore a primitive directness, a childlike surrender to the urge to create. But the painter gives up almost as much as he gains if he throws aside the means developed, particularly in color, in the last half-century. A true Primitive approach is an affectation today, and must be based on a withdrawal from life. And however much art departs from surface nature, art and life must remain inseparable.*

This is, of course, a matter of judgment. What I should like my readers to preserve as we proceed is a fine balance of open-mindedness and judgment. It is entirely necessary to take off the blinders

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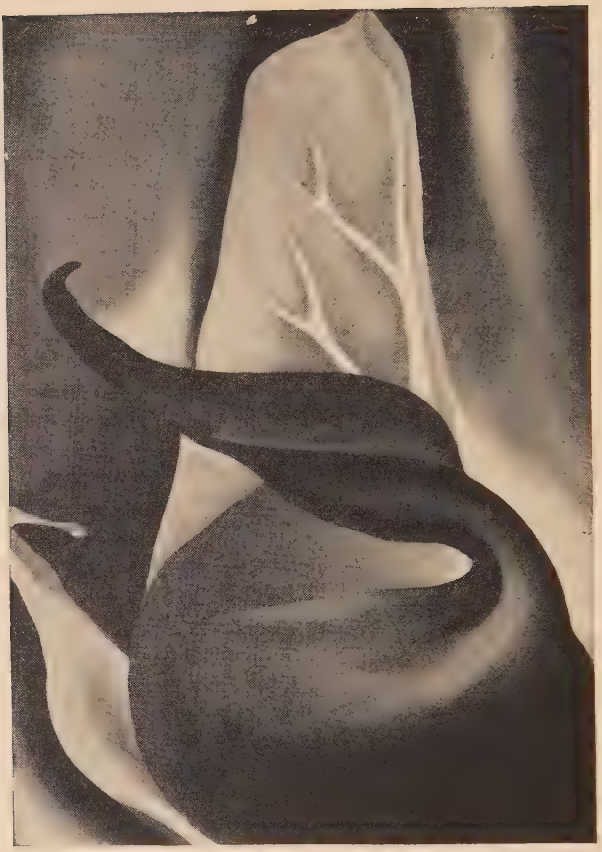
* At first glance, and often in *structure,* modern painting, sculpture and architecture have more affinity with primitive than with Greek, Renaissance, English and other "refined" types of practice: because of simplicity, directness, and spontaneity, and because of greater devotion to the processes of creation that occur before ornamentation begins. But the finer examples will be found to have qualities utterly impossible to the barbarians of mankind's infancy: a fullness, a reliance upon scientific means (as in architecture and painting particularly), and a range or intensity of expressiveness unknown to primitive times. In the historical section, and particularly on pages 62-64, I shall note certain accords in primitive and modern practice.

EARTH RHYTHMS, NO. 11,
BY RAYMOND JONSON

we were discussing a few pages back—the 19th Century blinders that narrowed the outlook into an unimportant and barren corner of the art field. In that escape lies open-mindedness. Judgment is a more difficult matter. Modern art, like every other new movement, gathers about itself a sad company of hangers-on, charlatans, and pickpockets, who merely capitalize its novelty, its "freedom," and finally its vogue. Having removed the blinders one needs to stand still and look about a bit, let the surroundings grow on one's consciousness before moving. Primitivists, decadents, dadaists, are all about. But one will soon learn to recognize true modern artists too.

As guide I can point out only one or two signposts that may make easier the approach from here on. One concerns the integ-



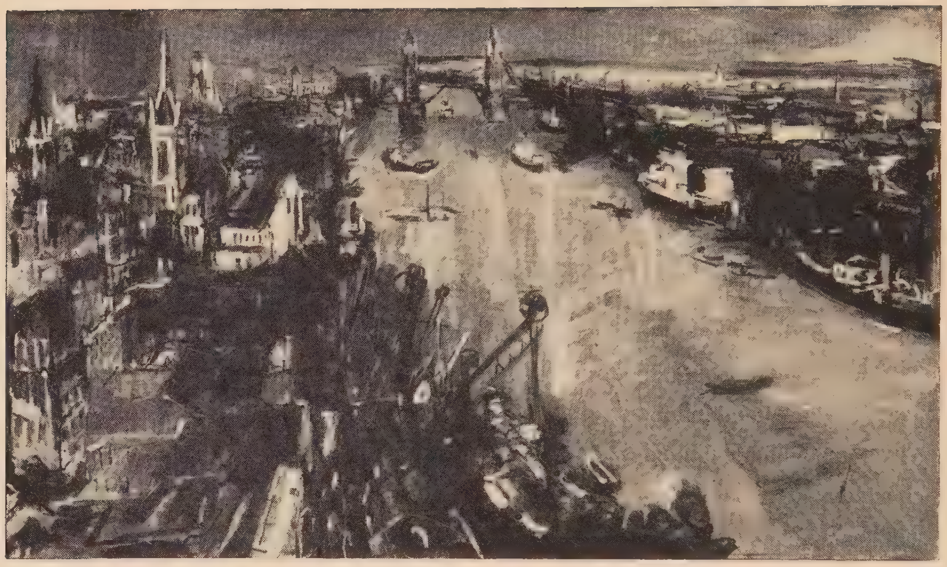
COS COB, BY GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

rity, the self-sufficiency of art. Whatever you are considering, remember that art can only justify itself on its own account. If it is not worth while for itself, it is just as well to forget it. Don't ask it to serve morals, or photography, or as a backscratcher to your memory and desire. Art brings emotions of its own kind, and these are not the emotions of objective beauty or the emotions of living.

If there is not something in it that speaks to us as fundamentally, as self-sufficiently, as religious experience or love, it is not worth all the bother mankind has made over it.

Another signpost has to do with the medium. There is a healthful insistence among modernists that the peculiar pleasure afforded by any work of art is partly an outcome of the materials in which it is shaped and the artist's inevitable way of handling those materials. Don't be seduced by a statue dressed up in the pretty sketchiness and lightness of painting. Don't be misled into believing that a painting is more profound because it tells all the details of an interesting story. Don't think that the steel panelling in a modern railway coach is any the more "artistic" for being painted over with a grain imitating wood. A lot of people have got into the jungle by that road.

And finally, let me not ever, ever, hear you say about anything you see in this book: "*I* could do something as good as that." Believe me, you couldn't. You must respect the artist's sincerity. To think that he doesn't know any better than to draw so roughly is probably an indication that your sense of values is undeveloped after all. More people expose their ignorance with that remark than with any other conventional expression of irritation at the lack of comforting shallowness or caressability in modern art. I hope to suggest how it may be rough and hard, and careless of the more delicate graces, and still bring more of the eternal in, evoke more of ecstatic response, than your grandmother's portrait done by Sir John Lavery or Rodin's ingratiating group *The Kiss*. The modernist is fundamentally concerned with æsthetic problems, and willingly lets those surface values go by.



TOWER BRIDGE, LONDON, BY OSKAR KOKOSCHKA

He may, of course, add delicacy and "finish" too; but he does not make those qualities the reason for his painting, sculpture or drawing. Don't make the mistake of judging a thing as typically modern just because it *is* rough. Delicate, sensitive line, for instance, is of the very essence of the medium of etching. Some modern painters are scrupulously careful in their outlines and gradations of color (look two pages back). And certain of the materials of contemporary architecture lend themselves characteristically to "high finish." Frank Lloyd Wright has even indulged in fairly intricate ornament, wholly original, *after* he has returned to the fundamentals of massing, engineering and honest use of materials. But in the realm we are entering there must be deeper formal qualities, before the artist troubles too much about surface.

II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE DANCE, BY MATISSE

MEN like Paul Cezanne, Oskar Kokoschka, Henri Matisse, and in America John Marin and Walt Kuhn—the men who make art history—more often than not die while still officially neglected, although a small company of people who judge by their emotions only are likely to appreciate and buy their works. (Emotional people, alas, have so little money!) The museums and academies, of course, are notoriously concerned with the dead past and the living echoes of that past. Even the speeding-up process of modern machine civilization—Gauguin, I believe, always spat when he pronounced the word—has not served to bring them closer to the living present. But the tragic part is that art appreciation in general is swayed by those institutions. The agencies which should be close to life, the schools, colleges, clubs, manufacturers, lecturers, and picture-buyers in general, are superstitiously servile to the judgments of those in authority; and the journalists, living first of all to meet the best-seller demand, either echo these others or revert to illustration—or, in rare cases, notice the modernist to crucify him with their wit. In general, the Past rules, a code of recognized practice obtains, and divergence in the direction of creative effort is disciplined.

It is little wonder, then, if the man who breaks through the bulwark thrown up by "authority," intoxicated a little by the beauty he has found in the forbidden territory, develops a huge contempt for the whole cultural edifice of the modern world. His contempt is likely to extend to history—as if history and not the men who codified it were to blame. But if it was true that we failed to welcome Cezanne because we judged by a narrow standard developed out of what had been, it is also true that we have to go farther back into history to find his reasons for being; and it is likely that we can best come to full appreciation by understanding the whole story of painting, and the blind paths into which it has blundered at times. This is not a suggestion that historical sanction should qualify our appreciation, but only an intimation that a little perspective never hurt anybody. Besides, most people's prejudices about modern art have arisen out of distorted history.

Specifically, the world has been judging the art of today—bustling, intense, shrill, energetic, dynamic today—by the standard of the quiet over-refined art of Greece's almost decadent period, by the art of sweet Raphael, by the art of the sophisticated, ease-taking, profligate Courts of France. We Americans, even, have been busy judging our period of youth, of birth, struggle, upheaval, of crude but pushing effort, perhaps of new heroic victories, by the refinements of a smoothed-out civilization, by the delicate ornaments, frills and excrescences produced and fit for the fancies of a king's mistress.

The fallacy of establishing these periods as criteria is not to be laid wholly to any arbitrary academy or authority. The structure of modern culture was built in the image of modern capitalistic civilization. Our art museums are no less dependent on the bounty of Capital than they once were on the bounty of kings. An ease-loving class at the top, with below it a cushion in a Bourgeoisie that sought only a fair measure of comfort, created the cultural standards and authorities—and these in turn decreed comforting art: Greek refinement, delicate ornamental court painting, safe, sane, cultured art. The art of the last hundred years, except where photographic naturalism mushroomed out into the slums, has well served its leisure-class patrons in that respect. Art has all but died of good taste.

The modernist, seeking to get to the soul of his art, is no less impatient of these standards of good taste out of history than he is of the photographic and sentimental limitations demanded by the magazine-reading Bourgeoisie. He thinks he sees a new world era dawning politically and economically. He knows that art should be breaking new ground. It can no more stand still or repeat than can religion. He approaches history scornfully—and what he finds is sanction for his own insurgency.

For he sees that it is chosen periods that are set up statically in the schoolbooks and museums as models. What is history, if not a record of change? Then he notes that the much-touted art periods usually correspond to the settled-down or decadent periods in the lives of the nations they represent. When the Greeks are studied, it is the high Greeks, not the early, inventive, creative Greeks, with the marks of creation on them. It is rather "the perfect Greeks": the sculptor who has become so clever that he can get in stone a perfect polished imitation of an athlete, disguising the stone quality, attaining to a certain pictorial beauty—but by no means so expressively, so emotionally, as the artists of the formative period. The modernist looks into the schoolbooks to find sculpture before Phidias practically ignored, its vigorous expressiveness discounted because the realistic touch and pleasing polish are lacking; while pretty things like Praxiteles' *Hermes* are known to every grammar school pupil. He feels that the time in which this nobly simple *Horse* was produced, was nearer the high point of creative power among the Greeks than was the mid-4th Century of Praxiteles or the Hellenistic period. He sees the Renaissance generally revered for its warmed-over Classicism. Raphael, with his sweet purity, becomes the world's standard of perfect painting, and all the fellows after Raphael are praised to the exclusion of the stronger, if often cruder Pre-Raphaelites. (The so-called Pre-Raphaelite School in England recognized that fallacy—in theory—but continued to paint within the refinements and limitations of contemporary English taste, took the surface characteristics but caught neither the spirit nor the freedom of the earlier time.)

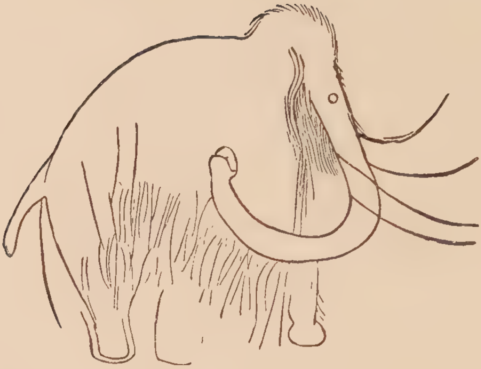
Along with these polished Greeks and reasonable Renaissance Italians, the modernists would bracket the French Court Painters and their prettified English fellows—Gainsborough, *et al.*—as es-

HORSE—EARLY
GREEK SCULPTURE

teemed far above their due. They further deny any creative value in Roman art—vulgar, showy, realistic! They feel that for 400 years there has hardly been anything more creative than colored photography. The Dutch *genre* painters? My, my! As bad as Greuze or Bouguereau.

The history of art as seen by this new generation of seekers, would outline about like this:

In the beginnings of Western art, say from the period of the reindeer-hunters, there are works of marked æsthetic sensibility. Man is not yet much troubled by intellect. An instinctive groping for some elementary symmetry leads first to rude sculpture and the shaping of vessels or weapons. There follow drawing (or scratching), and wall painting, usually with an admirable emotional directness. There were, to be sure, periods of realistic pursuit even in these prehistoric times, just as the imitative art of some savage



CAVE DRAWING

peoples of today puts them on a level as low as, for instance, the sculptors of our average academy exhibitions. But in general the European primitive peoples stand high in artistic creativeness. Somewhat comparable to them are certain still-existent "backward" peoples. African negro carving at its naïve best is an example, and the one most in public notice at the moment. The modernists are beginning to grant that even too much importance may have been read into negro art, simply for its negative value as being unrealistic. But in general, primitive art is highly esteemed as being emotionally expressive.

If the art of the reindeer-hunter was, in its representative element, simple, immediate, limited almost exclusively to the animals which were so much a part of his everyday life, the art of Egypt was no less restricted by the life of the people on the Nile. A powerful priesthood, mystery, fear, have left their mark on the generally servile artists of that larger half of known human history which is almost exclusively concerned with Egypt. But occasionally a generation of sculptors, given unwonted freedom, escaped mere perfected craftsmanship and stereotyped conventionalization to gain a finely solid expressiveness, achieving works that rank with the world's finest, as in the Theban and Saite periods.

Chaldæa and Babylon have left some few creative works, although the examples extant indicate no such surety of feeling as was evident in the best periods elsewhere; and Assyrian art bequeathes us hardly more than interesting realistic records of the cruelty of contemporary life.

Greek art is free from the mystery of Egyptian, and for long free of Assyrian realism. At first it is emotional, then intellectual —but always there is an element of *clearness* about it. The finely primitive things from Crete and Mycenæ—primitive in the best sense, strong, expressive—were followed by the heavy and architectonic works of the Dorians, and these again by the more feminine Ionians. After these periods, all richly creative, the strains fused

DRAWING BY PICASSO

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to flow beautifully in Attic art—but the fusion itself held the seeds of decay, and Phidias is a leader when the decline has already started. Polish becomes a first objective, the approach becomes over-intellectual, works of art are esteemed for being true, pretty, sane. The doctrine of "Perfection" of which the Greeks became enamored, is dangerous to freedom of emotion, to human instincts, and finally to living beauty. It is this doctrine that animates the sculptors and architects almost throughout the periods usually glorified—at any rate, from the time of the building of the Parthenon. Art becomes pictorial, imitative, unemotional, reasonable. Starkly creative things are no longer valued.

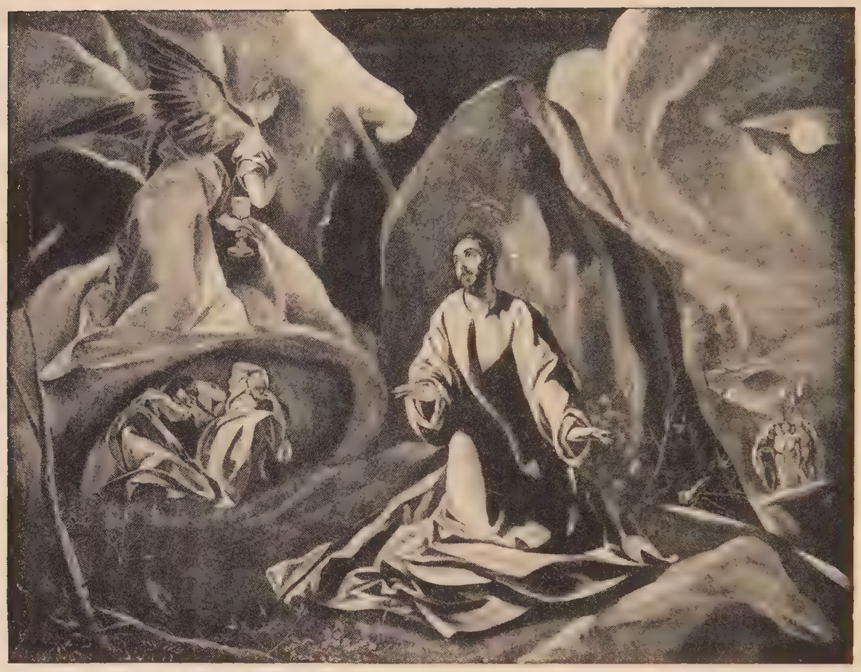
Rome—except when one counts in the Etruscan contribution—is uncreative throughout her history, imperialistic, materialistic. The Romans build on slavery, love magnificence, lose the spirit. They get nothing out of their country, from their own hearts; they import Greek artists, then imitate Greek art, for their comfort. Shallow show of art! (Except the magnificent engineering foundation.)

Christianity recovers the spirit of man. Emotion rises true again. So far as art is concerned, there is fumbling at first. After five or six centuries there is a flowering in the Byzantine of Eastern Christendom, which spreads Westward with individual works and with a general sensuous enrichment. As for the next development, Romanesque leading into Gothic, there has been an almost iconoclastic shifting of valuations by the modernists. They find "high" Gothic decadent, the spirit run out, the shell only surviving and getting itself over-decorated. The real art of the Middle Ages is in the stronger, serener, more honest Romanesque, and, at latest, in 13th Century Gothic. The later Gothic sculpture particularly, in its concession to realism, is infinitely inferior to the earlier, cruder but more expressive works.

Architecture is supposed by the moderns to have died with the coming of the Renaissance. Its last flicker was, perhaps, in the Florentine palaces, combining in a new synthesis Mediæval, Roman and purely local elements. From that time architecture is eclectic, unoriginal, tame, concerned almost entirely with modes of surface decoration—with façades. Post-Gothic sculpture also is pretty rather than moving, except in the authentic giant Michael Angelo.

Painting comes to its decadence later than these others. The "Primitives" and pre-Raphaelites in general are animated by a search for something formal or at least sensuous. Giotto, of all the "well-known" painters, is first claimed by the modernists as kin, and with him a considerable group of his immediate predecessors. After him, the decline, the true Classical Renaissance painters, Botticelli, Titian, Leonardo, the sweet Raphael, and all the also-rans of the schoolbooks.

Modernism, I believe, accepts Rembrandt in his most expressive moments (remember the *Old Woman Paring Her Nails* at the Metropolitan Museum); it finds evidences of form-seeking in Tintoretto; it grants that Rubens had the quality but in a showy extravagant way. Its one great god out of the period from Giotto to Cezanne is El Greco (Theotokopulos). How far this discipleship marks a reversal of accepted academic opinion may be judged from one instance: our most circulated history of art (in England and France as well as America, I believe), the *Apollo* of Reinach, illustrates no fewer than nineteen works of Raphael, whereas El Greco not only goes unillustrated but is not even mentioned in the



AGONY IN THE GARDEN, BY EL GRECO

book. Every school dictionary lists such illustrators as Correggio and Murillo, but El Greco is among those absent. And yet in the annals of world painting as compiled by the artists of today, El Greco's name leads all the rest. The reason lies in his emphasis on *form,* his seeking for an expressive æsthetic quality even at the expense of naturalness—a quality to be much talked about in coming chapters. I am adding here a reproduction from El Greco, opposite a typical modernist work, to suggest certain obvious parallels.

For the rest, there are conceded to be scattered painters of emotionally expressive achievement after the Renaissance, but no giants. And usually the "recognized" artists are little more than

DOUBLE PORTRAIT, BY KOKOSCHKA

competent illustrators. In German art, appreciation begins to shift from Dürer and Holbein to Cranach and Baldung; and there is not an important post-Renaissance figure until Hans von Marées, Germany's only important 19th Century painter. The modernists entirely overlook English art, except for a passing mention of Constable and Turner as an impetus to seeking for color-form. French art is dull or brilliant illustration through most of its history—very fine technically but very little expressive; although Poussin comes in for deserved appreciation. Those who grant to the "decorative" movement a certain validity as a part of modernism, still find a good deal to praise and enjoy in Puvis de Chavannes; and

Daumier has gained considerably in stature by reason of his being clearly a forerunner of the present-day emotional-organizational painting. But Cezanne is really the first epochal figure since El Greco. The three centuries between, with these few minor exceptions, have been given over to descriptive painting and sculpture, and imitative architecture. Realism, truth to nature, cramped the vision of the artist, and there were merely minor pendulum-swings to idealistic or naturalistic treatment, to added romantic or stylistic or classic rhetoric. Intellectualism rules; critics confound the spectator with facts; the world becomes too curious about externals, bashful about its own emotions.

In this summary, modernist-fashion, I have hit only the high spots of history as I think the average "radical" artist sees it. There would be acrid debates over many of the names mentioned if one brought them up in any studio; I have not even pleased my own preferences; I have merely attempted a rough-hewn cross-section of opinion. But of this much I am sure: some such rewriting of history is becoming necessary as the world gradually accepts Cezanne's achievement as a turning-point in art development, as it becomes apparent that for hundreds of years photography has been a false god among painters and sculptors.*

The reader, then, will do well to forget most of what he was taught out of the schoolbooks. He will do well to remember three points: First, there are no absolute standards in art, neither rules for creation nor tests that will serve for all peoples and all times—and particularly no authorities who can arrange artists in hierarchies that will stand the tests of newly creative eras. Second, the modernist believes that, æsthetically, we are at the breaking of a new era, that in it we are returning to *emotional expressiveness* as a fundamental—with perhaps a special intensity growing out of modern life. And third, there *have* been artists in history, some little recognized during the realistic centuries, others famous, who have had that peculiarly expressive quality. There have been, most notably, the primitives, the archaic Greeks, the Romanesque and early Gothic builders and sculptors, certain Orientals (of whom I have said nothing, of course, in this summary of Western art), Giotto, Tintoretto, and—most important of modern "discoveries"—El Greco. If one must find in history a background for the modernist movement, these are artists whose works are worthy of study.

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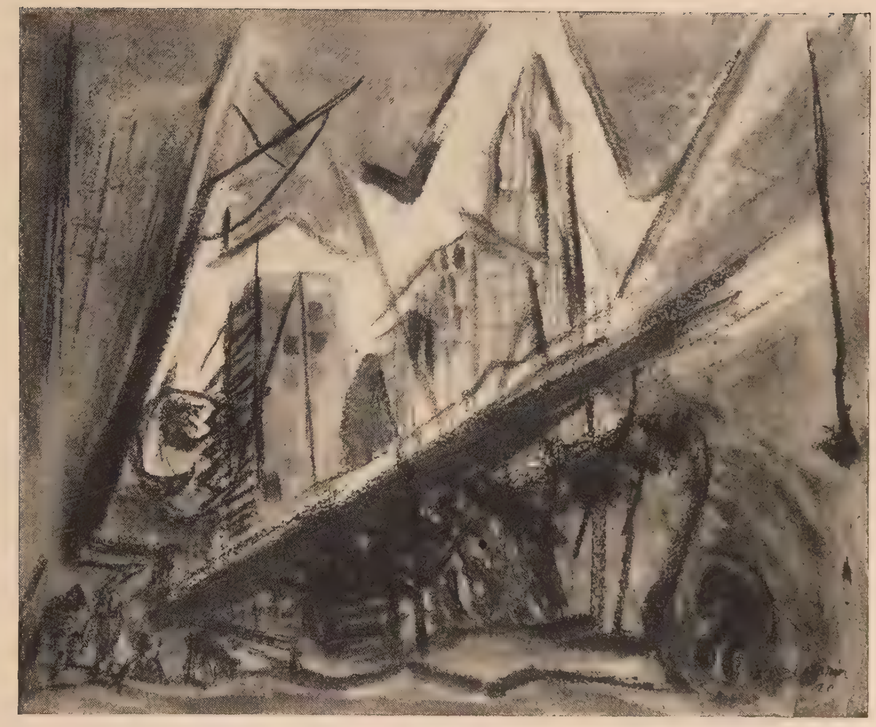
* I will ask the reader to note this paragraph particularly—its moderate tone. A book on modernism is bound to stir up controversy and counter-opinion. But the only really *unfair* criticism that was levelled at the first edition seemed to me to be that which stated that I wanted to cast away everything out of art history. Not only are my personal preferences broader than this summary of radical opinion indicates; but all any of us wants—except the downright Dadaists—is a *revaluation,* and less teaching that the safe photographic paintings constitute the highest art.

Personally I would send students out to discover the heritage of the past, both by way of opening new direct avenues to enjoyment, and to sharpen their perceptions, to insure the fullness of their understanding. I would have a seeker come *first* to a realization of the utter difference between 20th Century modernism and 18th-19th Century practice; and to at least a dawning sense of what it is that constitutes the difference. Then I would send him back into the past, asking him to note the affinity of modernism and primitivism, and the limits of that affinity; and I would ask him to find his eyes in relation to the Egypt of Akhnaton, the Byzantium of Justinian, the Italy of Giotto—and in relation to some other richly creative periods. Perhaps I would banish him longest to the Orient, for Oriental artists have seldom been seduced by the shallow appeals of realism, that rendered Western art degenerate for so pathetically long.

EGYPTIAN RELIEF (FRAGMENT)

III

THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND



LOWER MANHATTAN, BY JOHN MARIN

THIS picture seems to me to have quite obviously the quality that is the essence of modern creative painting. No individually creative work, of course, can elucidate a complete set theory; but something implicit here brings us face to face with the questions which we must meet sooner or later: what is the essential mark, the æsthetic warrant, of the modernist movement as distinguished from preceding developments? If the imitative element and the element of surface prettiness are only subordinate, what is it that really constitutes the heart of the visual arts? If it is a quality that can in a sense be isolated and recognized, is it universal, applicable to the true art of all time—or substantially modern?

It has been remarked often that one requires no knowledge of either history or theory to come to an enjoyment of music. At the present moment we are in no such fortunate position as regards the visual arts. We are bigoted. Due partly to the popular confusion of art with purely illustrative activity, and partly to mis-education regarding the fundamentals, one must dip into theory, as into history, to dislodge certain widely-held misconceptions. The Average Man has, in a very true sense, lost the power to judge for himself. When he trusted to his emotions—and that is what he does with music—he found himself in opposition to art "authority." Then when his emotional reactions were trained out of him, he had to take someone's else's word for it that what he looked at was art. A whole false structure of associative values—photographic likeness, moral truth, slick technique, symbolism, etc.—was formed for him. He must go deep enough into theory to find something in John Marin's painting above, which will take the place of those qualities of likeness, sentiment, prettiness and "meaning" which are obviously lacking in most paintings "since realism."

In brief statement, the theory that specially applies to the bulk of modernist achievement and experiment in painting, sculpture and the graphic arts may be put about like this: Art is an activity, inextricably bound up with life but only incidentally concerned with the surface aspects of nature, with an emotional realm of its own, concerned with expression rather than representation, with creation rather than imitation, and characterized in each separate work by a particular and essential quality in the nature of expressive *form*. It is a quality which can be intensified today as never before, through enriched means and as a reflection of the intensity of contemporary life.

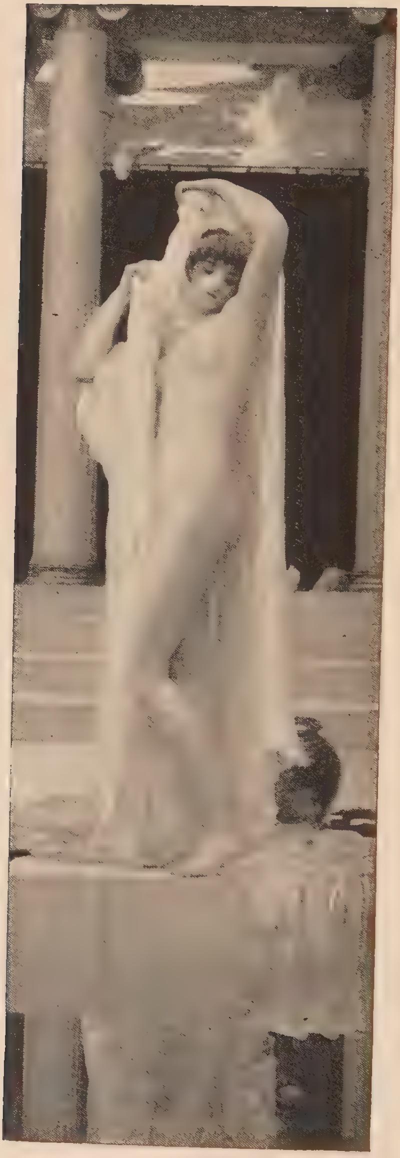
The core of any absolute statement of modern art theory is in the inclusion of the one word "form." It is that which we must investigate further if we would understand what all the true post-Impressionists are after, and why they consider 19th Century art generally futile, feeble and gutless.

When you listen to music you experience an emotion—reaching the point of ecstasy at times—which is entirely dissociated from the ordinary emotions of living. When you look at a noble building you experience a pleasure different in kind from that arising from contemplation of a naturally beautiful landscape. When you look at a painting or statue which is characterized by artistic form and not merely by objective likeness and technical virtuosity, you experience a reaction different from that afforded by a woman's pretty face or a beautiful body or a child among flowers. The beauty of the landscape may be very real to you, may seem to *free* you more than the work of art; and the woman's face or body may have a more intimate appeal, and the child a more caressable quality; but however pleasurable, it is not an artistic emotion which you feel from these things. You may even discover a "picturesque" value in them and say, "That is as beautiful as a picture"—but you will only confuse your mind if you confound the pleasure received from them with the determining and essential quality of a painting or statue. Indeed, one of the best kindergarten tests I know for a work of art is the question: "Is it merely picturesque, or has it æsthetic value of its own?" For, although the artist may be driven to creation by something he has divined in the woman or the landscape or the child, it is what he puts into the work that makes it art.

It is entirely necessary to get clear this distinction between the beauty of things living and the beauty created by artists. The beauty of things born, of nature, arouses our admiration in many ways, usually with a mingled emotion of wonder, pleased senses, desire. Art strikes straight to some separate æsthetic inner being, something as close to the spirit of man as it is possible to penetrate. To me this seems as fundamental an approach to the spirit, to disembodied spirituality, as those other two unexplainable highroads, love and religious experience. I will not venture here any speculation as to how close together or how distinct these three phenomena may be; I feel, however, that no man has lived his spiritual life to the full if he has not experienced widely of all three. Æsthetic emotion, arising from something which an artist has endowed with form, whether music, architecture or painting, is of that order, moves mankind thus fundamentally. The sensations arising from contemplation of a landscape or a butterfly or a flower are related to a different order of experience, closer to the physical senses. The beauty of a human face or body, to be sure, may be so bound up with love and with revelation of character and vaguely with desire that one cannot put physical or spiritual boundaries to it. But either way it fails to touch the æsthetic emotions.

Not only is the realm of art thus distinct from the realm of natural beauty, but nothing could be more disastrous to the artist than to try primarily to transfer the beauty of the one sort into his creations of the other sort. If it is the flower's natural appeal that he is carrying over with his art materials, there will be small place for creative form. Natural beauty is only a starting-point for the artist's emotion, and something naturally "ugly" or nondescript is as likely to serve. (I am adding here an illustration of Leighton's *The Bath of Psyche*, which is one of the best examples I know of *transcribed* beauty. All the thousand tendernesses of a woman's body are lovingly conveyed in the exquisite modelling and softly sensuous coloring. Such a picture is a thing to be desired—one would love to have it about; but it is beautiful emotional photography, not emotional art.)

"Expressive form," which, as near as blundering words can identify it, is the quality characterizing each particular work of art, the quality evoking æsthetic emotion in the spectator, varies in many ways: with the material of the art under consideration, with the intensity of the emotion felt and expressed by the artist, with the extent of abandonment to subjective emotion, with the degree of his naïveté or sophistication. It also varies in name, from the "rhythmic vitality, or spiritual rhythm expressed in the movement of life" of the Chinese Six Canons of painting, to the "spatial existence" and "voluminous form" of two recent American critics. The clearest elementary treatise about it is to be found in an admirable little book entitled *Art*, by Clive Bell. He calls it (in relation to the visual art) *significant form;* and his phrase has afforded a multitude of people a handy label for something they had before mentioned gropingly and even bashfully, because it seemed mysterious and nameless. Clive Bell suggests that this "significant form" endows with living æsthetic values every moving work of



THE BATH OF PSYCHE,
BY LEIGHTON

art from the primitives to the post-Impressionists. Despite the dangers in such a catch-phrase, it is so serviceable that I shall use it often, although personally I prefer to phrase it *expressive form*, because that seems to me a closer indication of the modernists' particular goal, linking up with much that I shall have to say about Expressionism. First, however, it is necessary to inquire briefly into the artist's way of creation: how he comes to expression, and more particularly what are the elements giving rise to or shaping or dictating the *form*.

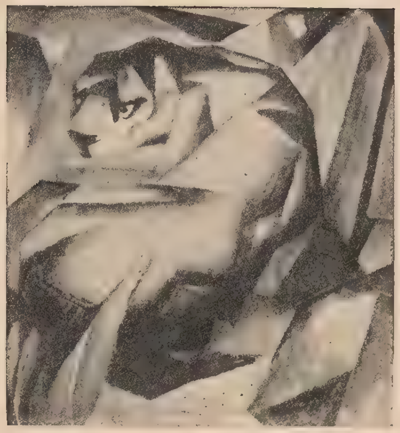
We may (arbitrarily) note three elements in the making of a picture or statue, after that unexplainable eruption of creative energy which we term inspiration.

First of these elements is something in the nature of subject-matter, the objective element in nature or in memory or in imagination; second, the subjective element, the artist's emotion playing around the object, choosing it, shaping it, distorting it, submitting it to some abstract permutation—the experiencing element; and third, the element of material and methods, the paint-quality or sculpture-quality which more or less shapes, and is more or less intensified in, each separate work.

The objective element, as we have seen, all but rode art to death in the period just drawing to a close. Not only did it enter into the making of a work of art, but any distortion of the outward aspect of the object was decreed to be a violation of Truth. (El Greco was explained away on the grounds of defective vision! Cezanne was astigmatic!) The modernists react violently from such deification of subject. Objective nature becomes merely a starting-point and not the end-and-all of art. In place of the old search for pretty models and picturesque sketching grounds, there was at the first breaking of the new force a monotonous deluge of the familiar and the unpretentious. We were flooded with apples, table-cloths and salt-shakers, just to prove that picturesqueness didn't count, that *any* subject-matter would serve. Some artists, to be sure, denied objective values entirely, painted abstractly; although it is not clear to some of us that they did not substitute some different order of subject-meanings, symbolic or psychic, for what they abandoned. Others, the Cubists, devaluated reality by disassembling the planes of nature and reassembling them according to an æsthetically-felt need. All these artists came to believe that as long as natural truth enslaved them there was little chance to come at something they felt vaguely as *form.*

There has been, indeed, an easily traceable progression toward the abstract, away from objective interest, ever since Cezanne distorted the vision of Impressionism to gain what he called greater "realization." But there is almost general agreement that abstraction, except in the case of a "time art" like mobile color or music, is a will-o'-the wisp in the arts. Some anchor must be maintained in objectivity, in life as experienced. To be sure, increased emphasis on the inner structural essence of the subject, increased personal expressiveness, and respect for the demands of the material, whether stone, paint-and-canvas or paper-and-ink, have all but done away with surface-aspect—but the object does somehow survive.

In so far as the modern artist takes heed of the object for its own sake, it may be said that he does so to discover in it some deeper significance, some structural over-value, an essential quality quite



TIGER, BY FRANZ MARC

different (at times) from its outward one-view aspect. Someone has said that when Franz Marc painted a tiger, he painted the "tiger quality," tigerishness, the emotion raised by tiger. How far this is an absolute quality in the tiger, with universal emotional significance, and how far it is subjective with the artist, we need not inquire here. But the example at least helps to define the new approach to subject, the search for deeper expressive values in the object than the accidental ones seen on the surface.

The second element, the artist's emotion, is of course the major factor. It differs from other people's emotion (on seeing the same object) in combining a more profound sensibility with an instinctive impulse to artistic creation. His special sensitiveness, which makes him divine the inner tigerish essence—feel the tiger—rather than merely see the animal photographically, is matched by an emotional impulse to express himself, as affected by that quality, in form.

It would be wholly futile to inquire, in a Primer, whether the

SCRIABIN, BY ZALKALNS

important point in creation is reached in the artist's emotional process or in his vitalizing of the form-quality in paint or stone; whether the emotion shapes inevitably the crystallization, or the "feel for form" directs the emotion. Until the æstheticians and psycho-analysts have dug deeper, we are only sure that the form-problem is much more closely bound up with the artist's emotion than it is with objective nature. We may be sure, however, that his leaping forward to a vision of the final artistic form, the creation of an "image" is spontaneous rather than reasoned.

Kandinsky, chief modern seeker for the abstract in painting, identifies the *soul* with the source of artistic creation, and claims to get his materials out of an originating "spiritual harmony"; but he more often than not brings recognizable objects into his canvases somewhere, and the fact that he fishes these out of his subconscious self and not directly from nature, is not a proof of spiritual origin. His purely abstract paintings, moreover, lack in general just that formal significance which we believe to characterize the most moving works of art.

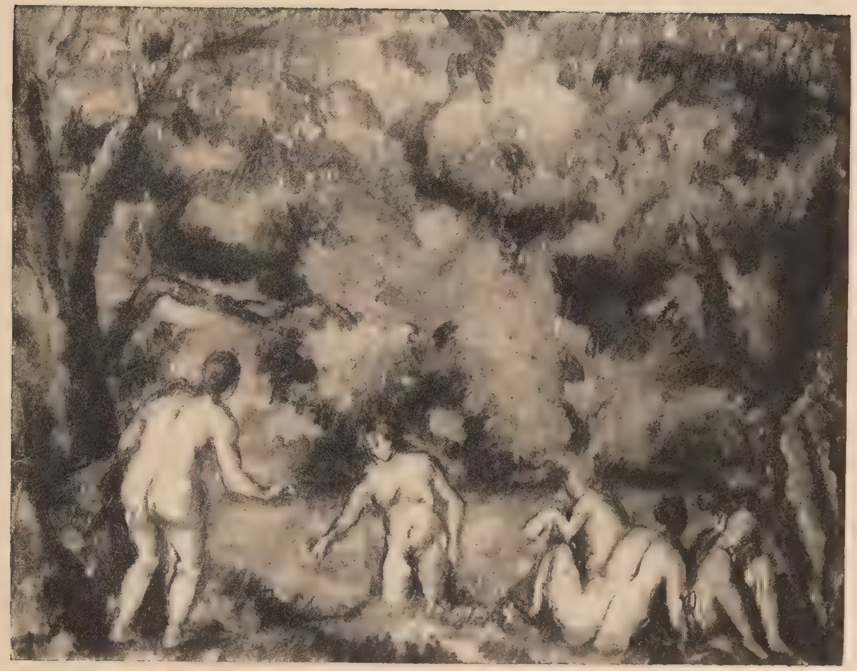
In short, the form-problem as the objective and subjective elements enter into it, can be stated something like this: The artist sees objective forms in nature; due to his special sensibility, and in the grasp of his emotion they become, so to speak, forms subjective; they then go through a filter of abstraction (his sense of absolute æsthetic form); and in the final expression they retain more or less of the original object as emotionally felt, but it is the revelation of the abstract quality that counts most.

The third element influencing the artist's conception of form, and helping to shape the crystallization, is that which grows out of the nature of his materials. For it is true that a part of the modernist's struggle for greater expressiveness has been concerned with the attainment of some peculiar virtue arising from the materials of his art. Modern sculpture (post-Rodin sculpture) especially is marked by the attempt to grasp an essentially sculptural massiveness dictated by the heaviness of stone or metal and its resistance to the tool; and progressive architects are trying to shatter their profession's obsession with the designing of façades, in favor of a return to the fundamental problems of building in modern materials. Charles Marriott recently wrote, in commenting on Clive Bell's theory of form: "I am inclined to believe that 'significant form' is nothing other than form in which the record of vision is felt to be compatible with free and characteristic movement of the

BATHERS, BY COURBET

human hand in or with the particular medium employed." That seems like a shallow evasion of the deeper problems involved in a theory of form, but it serves to indicate how far material has been recently studied for its special sort of expressiveness. The current toward subjective presentation has been paralleled by a current toward purification and intensification of means.

In thinking of form as a quality in art, then, it is well to keep in mind the three things from which we have been unable to dissociate it, from which indeed it is probably inseparable: first, the anchor in objectivity, the emotion of reality; second, the subjective process, the creative emotion of the artist, working through an ab-



BATHERS, BY CEZANNE

stract conception; third, the expressiveness of materials. I do not mean that you should think of these things when looking at any specific work of art—that would be ruinous; indeed, I begin to think that when you have got some sort of glimmer of the place of each of these elements, you should forget them all and go look at some modern paintings or sculptures. If you find expressive form speaking to you, as against subject-matter, that is all that counts. Analysis is only worth while as a part of forgotten experience.

The two illustrations on these two pages are placed together as an object lesson. Courbet's *Bathers* is typical naturalistic art at its best; Cezanne's *Bathers* is typical of the modern return to form-seeking. The difference involved in the comparison may be summarized as expression *vs.* representation; creation *vs.* description; form *vs.* aspect. In so far as nature survives in the Cezanne canvas it is not as the casual eye sees it, but as natural objects affect the creative emotion of the artist. That is the essential distinction—the boundary between realistic and modernistic art.

Why this distinction marks a true revolution in the realm of æsthetics should be clear when we reflect that, despite waverings between idealistic and naturalistic treatment (compare the Courbet and Leighton pictures), between classic and romantic escapes from familiar things, the whole normal development of art for approximately 400 years was limited by the imitation-of-nature canon. Expression in form as understood by practically all the modernists—whether emphasizing more the emotion of the subject, the artist's emotion, or material essence—is the very opposite of 16th-17th-18th-19th Century illustrative painting and sculpture and—in a slightly different way—imitative architecture.

An understanding of this shift in the *approach* to art (not merely in means or treatment) enables one to clarify the way by turning aside certain currents which have served to muddy the stream of modern art theory. These currents are symbolism, mysticism and romanticism. When one speaks of getting away from realism, someone is bound to mention one of these other isms as an alternative; but they really have nothing to do with the case.

Symbolism is, in baldest statement, the placing of one object or idea to suggest another. It is properly a subdivision of imitative art, because it deals with objective nature. The fact that it works by analogy or association of ideas fails to bring it within the field of emotionally expressive art. It is, rather, an intellectual tendency, baiting the spectator's mind with double entendre and with the aptness of one concept implying another. This is not a means to intensification but a sort of intellectual jugglery, on the material plane.

If mysticism is the constant struggle to pierce behind those veils that hide us into the petty world as it accidentally is, then the new art cannot get along without mysticism; but the new slope does not lie in the direction of that shallower mysticism which plays prettily with the veils that hide the heart of life. We have had enough of high priests and mystagogues, and of dimness for its own sake.*

Romanticism is at the far pole from modernist endeavor because it is based on a purely objective vision of a realm imagined from outward experience, much as Heaven is imagined with harps and streets of gold. The romantic artist merely takes the spectator away from life into a world of sentimental adventure—a weak escape from living. He ordinarily deals nine-tenths in glamour, bombast and sentimentalism.

The art of today lies rather in the direction of a more abstract means, of stark expression, not with symbols or illusory veils or pretty excursions, but with emotional reality intensified and crystallized in formal expression.

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* I happen to believe that the mystic approach to life is the only one worth practice by a wise man; if one understands mysticism to mean penetrating to deeper planes of experience, constantly illuminating the plane of physical living by light from the spiritual planes. But the definitions of the word are so various and so confused that—at the moment—in talking about art we can only, wisely, rule out "mystic" as an explaining term. For introductory thought upon certain relations between mysticism and art, the reader is urged to seek out the several books by Claude Bragdon.

BATHERS, BY OTTO MUELLER

Broadly, I have adopted "realism" as a blanket name for the sort of visual art where emphasis is on correct representation—thus including practically all phases that are not essentially form-seeking. When I speak specifically of the "Realists," however, I have in mind those unrelentingly literal painters from Courbet to Sargent, who correspond to the Zolas and Tolstoys of fiction and the slice-of-life dramatists. Impressionism was a special aspect-of-the-moment sort of realism. And Naturalism, specifically, was that vicious phase which boldly and frankly existed for the clever meticulous transcription of nature, for illustration with detail deified.

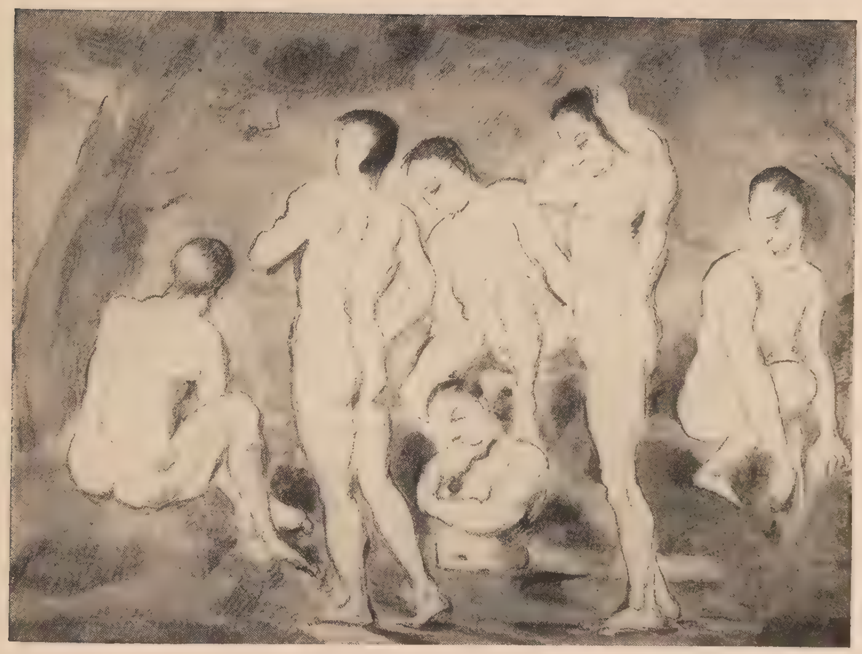
Distortion is rife in modern art. Some of it is wilful, unnecessary and unjustified by any æsthetic gain, and breeds confusion. But the artist's right to a deviation from natural aspects is more than justified if he realizes some deeper formal value such as that existent typically in Cezanne's mature work—as in his lady *Bathers* a few pages back and in his gentlemen *Bathers* a page or two forward. The German Expressionists, interpreting Cezanne's aim as something strongly structural, go even farther in arbitrary treatment of nature—as in Otto Mueller's *Bathers.*

"Distortion" is, of course, a purely comparative word outside the field of mathematical science. All art that has subject-matter is distorted if judged by photography. What we really mean in applying the term to modern art is that the artist has been so intent upon some purely emotional or artistic problem that he has shoved likeness to nature into a secondary place, being careless of her or twisting her aspects to such an extent that the eye looking for likeness is shocked.

Those who are so shocked—and academic critics are bound to be, at first—put forward various excuses for distortion as practised by scattered great artists throughout history: the Primitives in general were lacking in sensibility and had imperfect control over their materials; El Greco suffered from defective vision; a very few, like Michael Angelo, must be excused because genius is above ordinary rules. But the modernist simply topples over the whole structure by saying that if art is to be an activity worth while on its own account, its manifestations should be judged solely from the standpoint of artistic (not photographic) loss or gain; and that the eye artistically trained will unconsciously leap the barrier of distortion. It is being so proven every day, as people who originally laughed at what they called "crazy art" come over into the field of appreciation of Matisse, Cezanne, Picasso, Kandinsky and their fellows. The discords of the previous century become the materials for this century's music. More people constantly turn to enjoyment of primitive and archaic sculpture as against that of the "finished" periods. And appreciation of El Greco grows while photographically expert and sweet painters like Murillo, del Sarto and even Raphael tend to recede to a respected historical desuetude. Even William Blake comes in for a belated vogue in England.

It is no argument, perhaps, but a significant coincidence that the seekers for a living formal quality in painting and sculpture seem to detect it most easily in those very artists whose distorted vision the academicians seek to excuse. But let us inquire into the quality of distortion only as it is evident in the work of Paul Cezanne. His paintings clearly achieve expressive form in the fourth-dimensional sense. Beyond the three dimensions of length, breadth and perspective depth, there is a rhythm, voluminous movement, or a poised spatial relationship that speaks emotionally to the spectator. In a great many of his canvases one seems to detect a fluctuating of the volumes and planes, a palpable feeling of emotional organization. This *roll* within the canvas is the most evident visual sign in a roomful of modern paintings.

The physical phase of Cezanne's distortion can be detected in the way in which objective bodies or planes are bent backward or forward at the point of meeting, as if leaning to each other in a profounder contrapuntal design. Accidentals of nature are bent to advance or recede in accordance with the demands of abstract spatial organization. There is no other explanation than that Cezanne has deliberately (or instinctively) deformed nature for æsthetic purposes, distorted aspect for the sake of poising abstract form in his canvases. Since physically it is largely light (color)



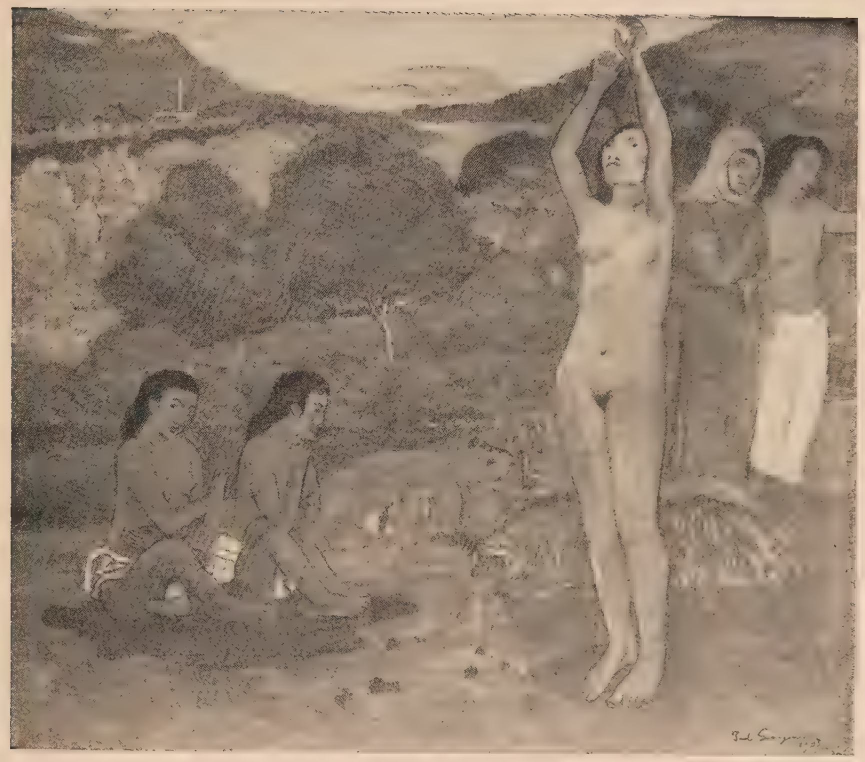
BATHERS, BY CEZANNE

with which he hangs up, so to speak, this deeper rhythm, I must ask the reader here to search out and study an original Cezanne painting, or other work frankly deviating from natural aspect.*

* Fortunately galleries of modern art have multiplied greatly in the years 1925-1931. The finest public collections are, of course, in Russia and Germany. In the United States the outstanding examples are the Phillips Memorial Gallery in Washington, the Barnes Foundation in Merion, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. But the Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts has given up almost the entirety of its new building to modernist works; such leading historical museums as those at Cleveland, Detroit and Chicago have modern annexes (being far ahead of New York's Metropolitan Museum in that respect); and Los Angeles allots more space to the moderns than to its pretty bad historical collections. The lists of changing exhibits in museums and dealers' galleries, in a city like San Francisco, for instance, indicate a healthy swing toward what would have been termed, ten years ago, "radical" art. There is hardly a sizable city in the Union which fails to afford some opportunities to study recent manifestations of the new spirit.

Next to distortion, crudity. The academicians are appalled at the lack of refinement in modern art. Need one take the trouble, in this age of scientifically terrible wars, million-volt discharges, steel and concrete, to say that table manners are well enough in their way, but hardly at the heart of progress? Repeatedly art has died of polish, to be reborn to glory with the effort-marks of creation on it. Perfection of finish is practically never a mark of the great periods. Our pretty public library buildings and our slick pseudo-Greek-temple banks are only too eloquent of the refined culture of the architects who built them—knowing everything about design and ornament, and nothing of the romantic and exciting *art of building.* One longs for the mark of a tool or a gaunt stretch of wall in their buildings, for a building that above all else *builds.* If the deeper creative harmony is there, seeming surface crudity is not going to hurt either painting or architecture—or any work in any art.

One word more about the quality *form.* It is not always understood, even among adherents of modernism, to mean that moving, voluminous, fluctuating, fourth-dimensional thing that is detectable in a painting by Cezanne or Kokoschka or Marin. That, I should say, is the most generally accepted interpretation. But another view is that compositional organization even in a surface sense, as in the *decorative* painting of Gauguin, is an achievement of expressive form. Here it is linear rather than voluminous organization, a surface rhythm rather than spatial orientation, simple harmonic composition rather than contrapuntal. Æsthetically it is less profound, the spectator's response being more largely sensuous, without the same emotional depth.



TAHITIANS, BY PAUL GAUGUIN

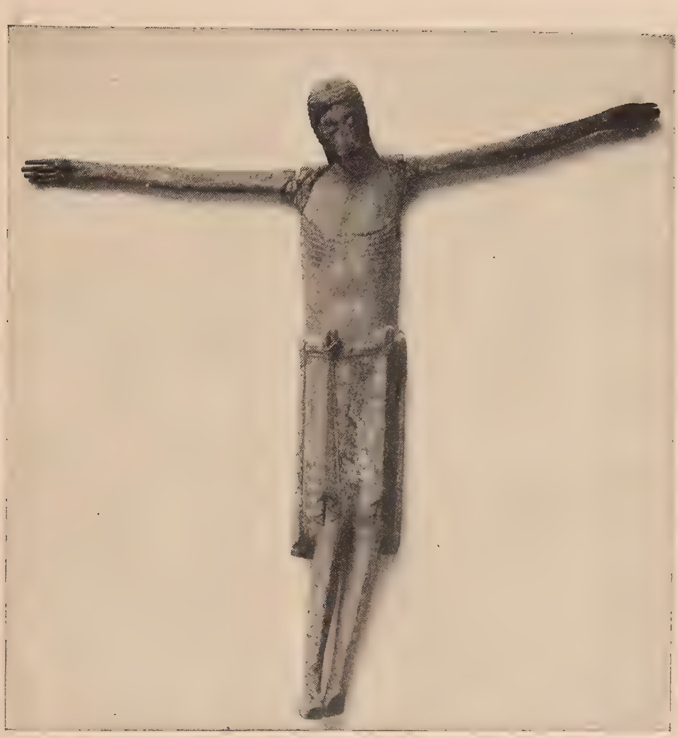
But gorgeously sensuous values in painting are better than literary or photographic or technical ones, and so this too must be granted a modern validity, as being revolutionary in a milder way. We shall hear more of the "decorative split" later on. Here I only want to guard against any reader's zeal in trying to judge Gauguin, long grouped with the post-Impressionists, by the form-quality of Cezanne. Personally I prefer to consider the sensuous appeal in a Gauguin picture as a sort of first dimension of that deeper spatial order which is Cezanne's—and both modern.

It would have been possible to approach this matter of the form value in art by many other channels. Here at the end of the chapter I will not insist upon my own method of seeking out a detectable but undefinable quality in the nature of "expressive form." I only know that for me and for thousands of others the realization of a primary æsthetic content, in many modern works and in some ancient ones, has opened channels of appreciation and enjoyment. The skeptic—he who doubts still that there is any essential "art value" marking off creative work from mere illustration or surface ornament—may find plenty of support in the writings of academic æstheticians. And on our own side of the fence he may find a stimulating controversy over the naming of the elusive value that the creative artist puts into his work. He may prefer to avoid labelling the thing even if he believes in it.

Hans Hofmann in a single article on this subject mentions, in contrast to photographic, story-telling and other introduced values, "plastic beauty," "formal complexes," and "music-like relationships of plastic units," and goes on to state that "everything rhythmically organic is true. Everything which results from the proper feeling for rhythmically organized spiritual units is true and alive—alive within itself." All this is illuminating and helpful; but the primer method of approach seems to demand a simpler label for the essential thing in the work of art. So please try out my phrase "expressive form" so long as you are in the primer stage. I too hope that you will soon outgrow the need for any word or other intellectual symbol. As soon as possible you should *experience* what the artist has put into his painting, not talk about it.

IV

THE BACKGROUND IN MODERN LIFE



CHRIST ON CROSS—ABOUT 1200

THIS statue seems to meet all the specifications of the modern art theory outlined in the last chapter. It has definite form-quality which speaks to the spectator emotionally. It is free of subject-interest in any immediate sense. It is unphotographic to the point of distortion. But it is not modern in time. It is, indeed, an expressionistic work of art done in a time when the word "Expressionism" had not been dreamed of. The Expressionists are the latest group of 20th Century modernists: this statue dates from the 12th or 13th Century. It is time to inquire how far the modern art movement is a return to the ancients and how far typically a product of today.

I am conscious that I have failed to indicate with any exactness to what extent my introductory chapters, and particularly the sketch of the theoretical background, apply to all formal art, and how much should be attributed definitely to the forces of life today. In this last of the background chapters, before going on to the actual story of the development from Impressionism to Expressionism, I hope to clear up some of the clouds of confusion that have, perhaps necessarily, hung over our approach to the subject.

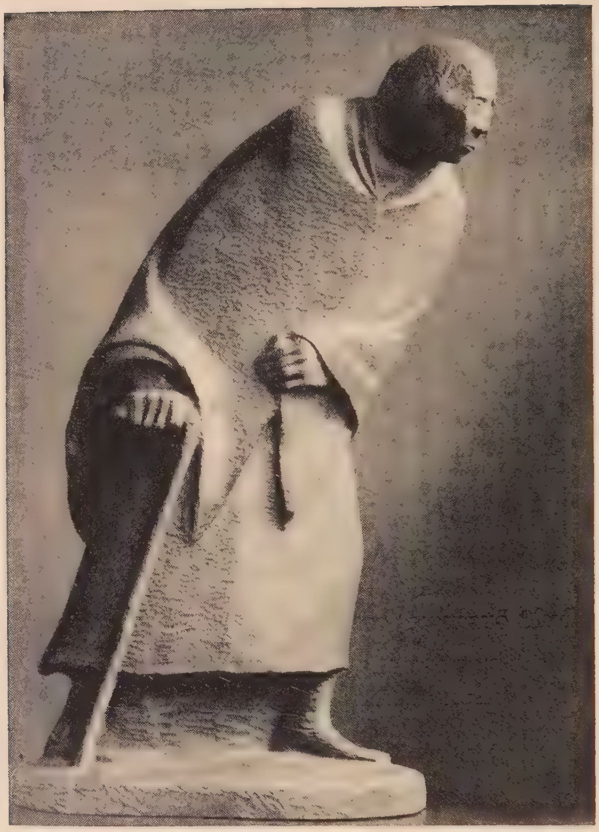
In the light of the theory of expressive form suggested in the last chapter, it should be evident why the post-Impressionists claim as kin the Egyptians of the less elegant periods, the Cretans, several phases of Oriental art, the early Gothic sculptors and architects, El Greco, and the negro carvers. Whenever something in the nature of emotional content became of greater importance than qualities of imitation, lofty subject-matter, virtuosity, etc., the artists of that time created works that link them with the modernist group. It is clear, then, that mere adherence to the idea of an essential expressive form at the heart of artistic creation cannot be considered an earmark of modern endeavor. Probably the theory has never before been so consciously formulated as in the last twenty years; but in so far as it is a foundation-post of modern art, that art builds into the finest, although not the most recent, periods of the past.

Through adherence to this universal central idea of what constitutes art, the painter, sculptor or architect has been brought back to a directness and simplicity that may or may not be considered primitive or archaic. Ornament is stripped away, flourish disappears, all the elements of what Clive Bell calls "technical swagger" are exorcised. It is a gain not to be reckoned lightly.

Primitive man, whether of the Europe of thousands of years ago or of black Africa of today, is direct not only by instinct but by virtue of ignorance of elaboration. The cleverness of exact involved imitation, of intricate ornament, of the transfer of the values of one medium to the materials of another, is a development of more sophisticated periods. Bored civilizations crave the distraction of ornament. People who know too much about nature let her "truths" limit their expression: they must stop to put in accidental shadows, perspective, background. The primitive cuts through these to the thing itself, standing out naked.

It is necessary, if we are to have any art that is worthy the name, to get back to that directness, that nakedness, *as a starting-point.* To adopt primitive conventions along with the directness is a confession that we are poorer than savages. Doubtless in many ways

DRAWING, BY MASEREEL



OLD WOMAN WITH A STICK,
BY ERNST BARLACH

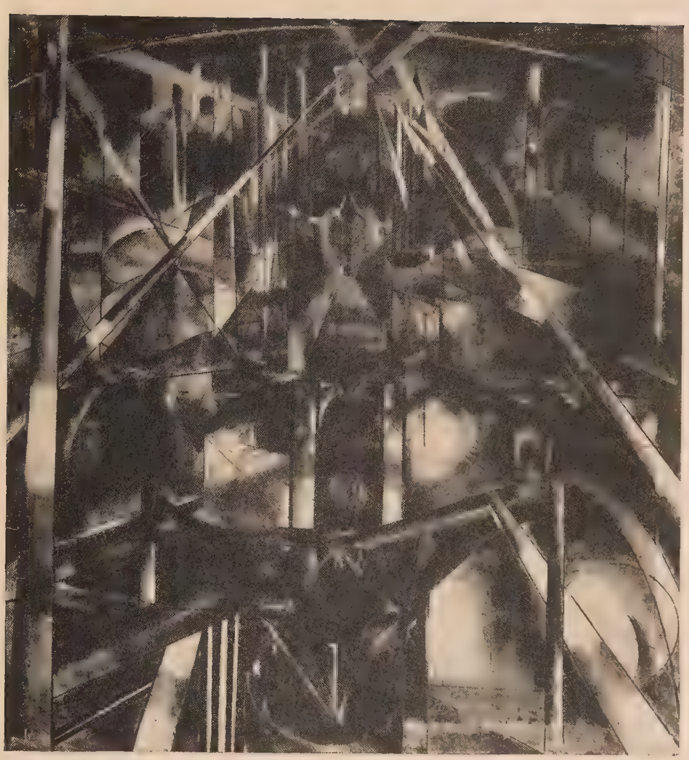
we are. But we cannot attain to their blessings by renouncing our own. The need is for modern expressiveness on a primitive or elemental foundation.

In some of the arts there has been an "honest" period, a period of return to direct unadorned realism or imitationism, before the break into form-seeking post-Impressionism. In architecture Sullivan and Berlage were crying out for an honest consideration of structure and material before Wright, Mendelsohn and Taut began their experiments in modern expression. Maillol shook off the adventitious Impressionistic qualities fastened on to sculpture by the generation of Rodin, and got back to plain honest sculptural qualities before Epstein, Gaudier, Lachaise and Lehmbruck began their practice of distortion for the sake of intensification. Even in painting, one of the three most-noted Post-Impressionists, Vincent Van Gogh, was most important for directness and simple honesty. And in those sub-arts where form-quality is necessarily incidental to representation—in illustration and in caricature—this return to directness is a chief characteristic of modern achievement. Could anything be more uninvolved than the little drawing by Masereel above? Could any primitive have gone more directly to the heart of his problem? No background, no detail, nothing but—cannon, churchman. The draughtsmen of the 19th Century did not think so simply. If that nakedness is primitive, ancient, let it be recorded that modern art is not wholly modern.

This sculpture in wood by Ernst Barlach, *Old Woman with a Stick*, typifies the period of return in sculpture. It is honest, without any dramatic or story-telling qualities, without ornament, and without asking that tribute of wonderment at faithfulness to life which Meunier, in a similar field, seems to demand. The example also serves to carry us over to consideration of another sort of return—to truth to materials. This is sculpture in wood, and the quality of the wood is in the very feel of it.

The return to more intimate media—wood sculpture, etching (not reproductive but for its own sake), autographic wood engraving, lithography, enamels, ceramics, etc.—is in itself an indication of a new passion for direct expression. And throughout the arts the media are being explored for characteristic and essential values: stone no less than wood, paint (leading into light and mobile color) no less than words; and in architecture, steel, concrete and glass. How far the world had forgotten these essential values is clear when one remembers that few monumental statues of the 18th and 19th Centuries were cut by the "sculptors" themselves, and how completely architecture and engineering were divorced, how exclusively the architect worked on paper. Fitness of material came as a matter of instinct with the ancients. Twentieth Century art takes up that asset where it was dropped centuries ago.

Let us turn to something in modern art that cannot be said merely to be reversion to other times, and so come at the question from the other direction. This *Brooklyn Bridge* by Joseph Stella seems at first glance to be 100-per-cent up to date. But let us go forward a little carefully here; it is really less expressionistic than the *Christ on the Cross* at the head of the chapter. The point is that, with subject matter become so minor a part of art works, a 20th Century objective interest really carries us a very small bit on the way to true modernism. The spirit which creates airships, automobiles, dynamos and Brooklyn Bridges concerns us very much, and these things may have in themselves art values. But as subjects for representation they are merely novel. The Futurists ran aground on that objective reef. Their technique, too, was illustrative. They illustrated, and repeated, the "force lines" of the modern machine age. But that has little to do with a new directness, a formal significance or a new expressiveness. We shall meet these Futurists again in a separate chapter. Meantime Stella's



BROOKLYN BRIDGE, BY JOSEPH STELLA

Brooklyn Bridge must be judged for something beyond subject values if it is to hold as a significant modern work. It fortunately has a quality that satisfies quite apart from any recognitional delight.

The quality that is, perhaps, most indisputably and completely modern is *intensity*. The current of life has deepened, the rhythm has quickened, improved means of communication multiply the sensations that crowd upon us, travel enriches our impressions and fertilizes the mind, machines assail and toughen the nerves, lights

FROM MY PARIS WINDOW,
BY MARC CHAGALL

are brighter and noises louder than ever before. Art cannot remain as quiet as in the past: it must not slip back into being merely a refuge from life. Its values must be intensified. It must live up to its age.

Buildings are built higher than ever before, because more people crowd into a tiny area. The architect, being educated, begins by trying to disguise the height, breaking up the façades in accordance with the rules of the established horizontal architecture. But finally modern-minded architect-builders catch the spirit of rising steel and concrete. They put up here and there buildings that glory in their height, that make capital of their thousand window openings, that reflect power and intensity. Painting finds new sensation

LOVERS
BY HEINRICH CAMPENDONK

values in purer color. Sculpture begins to compose again strongly in heavy blocky sculptural form-organizations. A few dramatists forsake the old playwriting formula and pile up emotional climaxes with little regard to "natural" transitions or background. Music jazzes up. Poetry seeks the intense palpitating image, and falls all over itself in a new freedom—or license. Directness, piling up, intensification become the order of the day.

Only by some such process—doubtless overdone in spots, generous spots, by the modernists—can art keep up with life. An anæmic poeticism will not do. We are no breed of tender-nerved, modest-Lucy-by-the-doorstep, maiden-lady impressionables. (I question whether there exist any more maiden-ladies, in their minds—vicariously they have all experienced the richer life.) Silence may be doubly grateful to us in contrast to the prevalent noise. But art will make use of the double effectiveness of that silence and the full intensity of the noise. The contrast is a new asset.

Realism of the brutal sort that for a time paralleled Impressionism doubtless helped to prepare us for this intensity. Forain and Toulouse-Lautrec, the slum-explorers in fiction, the Wedekinds of drama, showed us that there is no more art in the surface aspects of poverty, prostitution and darkness than in the aspects of kings' halls and sunny fields. But we did get a deeper sense of life palpitating under these things. And it is the business of modern art to get at the deeper reality that lies beyond realism. It is here that the rediscovery of "form" is matched by a life-quality that is of today.

The psycho-analysts have helped. Any exploration of the regions nearer to the soul brings increased understanding, a firmer grasp on reality as against aspects and conventions. We must not let the neurosis-mad psycho-analysts explain modern art as merely wish-fulfillments, with objective sources in the subconscious—as a sort of outlet for repressed desire and discord. (The trouble is that there *are* many neurotic artists in the world today, and they give substance to the outlet theory.) But we may well follow up any clue that leads toward the inner sources of being and creation. And after all, transferred ideas, as in the work of Grosz, Campendonk and Chagall are likely to be more diverting than the dull transcriptions of nature done by the properly conscious academician: just as Joyce's *Ulysses* is likely to intrigue us more than

BY HEINRICH CAMPENDONK

Robert Chambers or the fiction magazines, or Eliot's *The Waste Land* more than the Longfellow school of verse.

Some critic has labelled the *Ulysses* sort of thing as belonging to the "stream of consciousness" school. Art becomes a spout for everything that passes on the plane of personal consciousness, whether it is outward objective impressions, mental throw-ins, or eruptions from the subconscious reservoir of repressions, instincts and desires. Grosz and Chagall particularly among the graphic artists lay themselves open to some such interpretation. But most of the modernists, from the plain Cezannists through the Cubists to the expressive-form Expressionists, join in counting such dumped-personality paintings as outside significant art accomplishment.

About all these others there is always something in the nature of order or abstract æsthetic purpose. Order is, in a sense, what they are after above all else.*

But Grosz, Campendonk and Chagall are all Expressionists when at their best, Dadaists at their least responsible moments, and of the dumped-personality school between times—on their neurotic, and sometimes frankly erotic days. One may add that even this school, contemporary with, if not growing out of the study of psycho-analysis, has its forerunners in history, for instance in Brueghel the Elder.

The machine as art. While we deplore the lack of inventiveness and the reliance on imitative run-out ornament in our furniture-making, our hardware and our chinaware, we are prone to overlook a beauty that is wholly and typically modern in our everyday machinery. The ordinary hand-telephone has its values in the directness with which it is designed for its purpose, and in the simplicity and relationships of its lines and volumes. The machinery in the power house has a potent line-and-form fascination that anyone

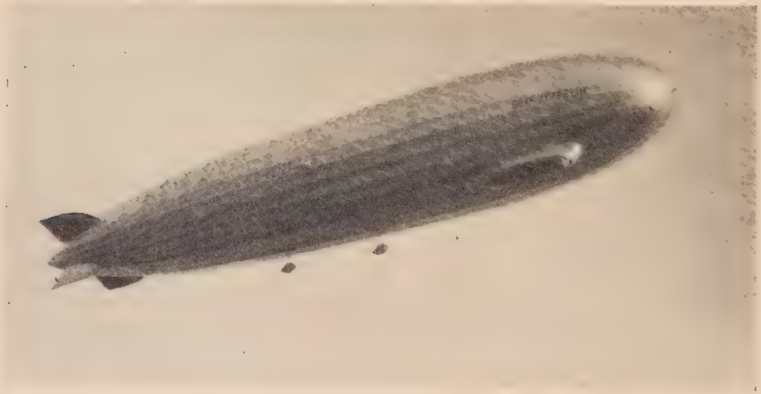
* In the chapter on Expressionism I shall return to this matter of art and modern research in psycho-pathology (pages 195-6). I have imbedded there a review of Dr. Pfister's book *Expressionism in Art,* wherein he considers present-day "distorted" painting wholly as a channel for the riddance of repressed desires and ego-twisted symbols. There are other critics who would explain away the deviation from natural aspects as due to the belching up of undisciplined conceptions and cryptic objects from the artists' sub-conscious. But these interpretations imply a belief in the photographic duty of art: this is a return to the literal-objective or realistic approach, but taking into account the dual mind. I judge that most modernists who have emancipated themselves from realism also resist the conception of art as a channel for soul distress, as a form of neurotic idea-transference. They recognize distortion as justified when used consciously or intuitively for gain in emotional intensity and expressive sharpness. Psycho-analysis is considered in relation to the creative artist, very interestingly, in *Everyman's Genius,* by Mary Austin, Indianapolis, 1925. A bibliography therein will lead the student to books about the borderland where modern art, mysticism and psycho-analysis confusedly meet.

alive to art must feel. But most common in experience today is the æsthetic value of the motor car. The boy who tells his father that "The new Chrysler is a beaut" is not merely being slangy. He has probably felt intuitively something that is soundly and effectively artistic. For the sheer volume-design of the automobile, its dependence upon stream lines and expressive mass instead of ornament for its "looks," and its absolute sense of fleetness, are qualities that, within the field of the arts of use, bespeak art-sense, and qualities to which we respond instinctively.

Now I know that it is not orthodox to appreciate these useful modern things. Adherents of the classic, the romantic, the idealistic in art find it distasteful that anything so common should be identified with æsthetic values. For generations art has been aloof from ordinary life. But if children weren't taught so exclusively that the picture on the wall is art and the telephone and automobile merely useful, we should begin to accomplish a general return to instinctive appreciation. Why not tell the boy that his baseball bat, perfectly fashioned for its purpose and with a flowing symmetry, has an element of beauty? Let him thrill over the new Chrysler, the latest Packard, the Reo or Cord. The modern locomotive is as thrillingly expressive as anything in the history of the useful arts.

The æsthetic values in these things are not clearly of that order with which we were concerned in the last chapter. In the first place and fundamentally, limitations of subject matter and of ultimate placing give way to limitations of use. And there can be no question here of subordinating that element to a conception of pure abstract form. But the formal element does enter, both out of the expressiveness of purpose—speed, as so beautifully conveyed in the design of a yacht, a motor-boat or an airplane; power, as in a large dynamo, a hoisting-machine or a gasoline engine—and out of the emotion of the machine-designer. The element of expressiveness of materials is notable, as in modern architecture and sculpture. The metal has its own quality of line and mass. There is loving manipulation of materials and essences here—for instinctive expression. Our response may be more nearly related to our sensuous response in the case of purely decorative art than to that deeper emotion we experience from profound pictorial organization; but it is a tribute to art—and modern.

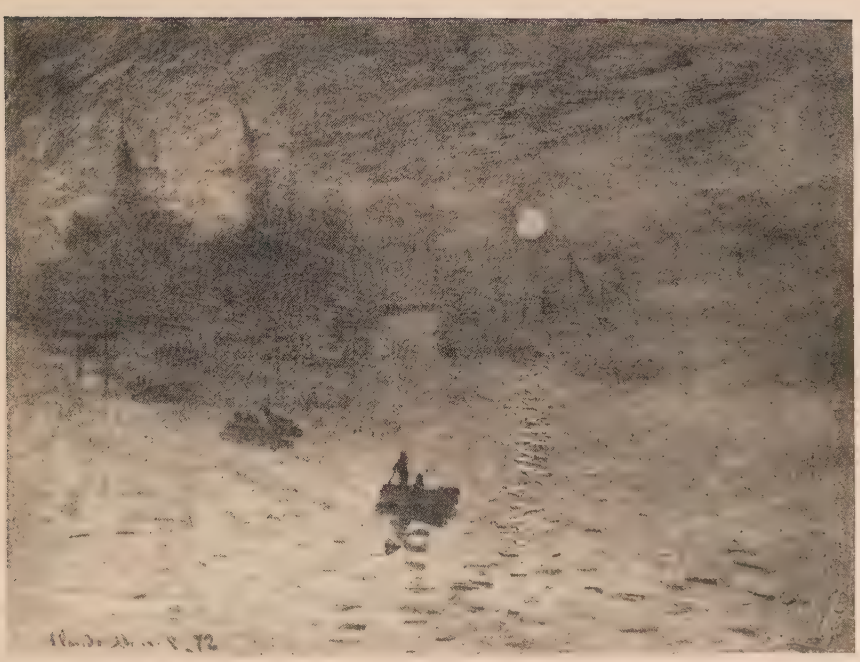
Modern machine civilization, then, brings its own values in the useful arts. In the absolute arts, it adds to the rediscovery of form a new intensity. Directness is regained. Our own sort of order begins to appear, shaped at first somewhat by confusion. Life, not the desire for escape from life, urges us on to creation.



V

IMPRESSIONISM AND POST-IMPRESSIONISM

THE WHITE HORSE. BY PAUL GAUGUIN



IMPRESSION: SETTING SUN, BY CLAUDE MONET

THIS pretty picture, although it was considered so strange and revolutionary a few decades ago that the painter was ridiculed and vilified through a period of more than a dozen years, no longer seems eccentric. It even seems tame and unmodern. It fits back perfectly into the perspective of art history. It has become familiar—even in the fresh, brilliant coloring which the illustration does not show; it has served its purpose, it has gone into the museum of the past.

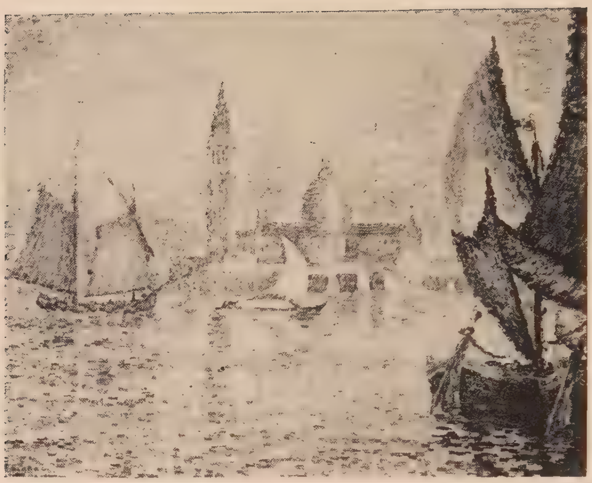
And yet this painting by Monet, this typical Impressionistic painting, has a definite place in a book on a developing modernism.

It marks, so to speak, the jumping-off place. It is typical of the last phase of realism, against which modern art is most obviously a revolt. It is typical of realism in a very special way. Impressionism had worked realism down into the ultimate corner: where not merely any imitation of nature would do, but only an imitation of an immediate and evanescent aspect of nature. Impressionism in painting also links with contemporary work in a constructive way: it brought color to a purity and a scientific accuracy which afforded the necessary starting-point for the excursions of the true modernists.

Impressionism, even in its color phase, was rooted in naturalism. Painters observed for the first time that the sky was not necessarily blue, or the tree green or the cow red. They discovered that, *as seen*, the sun inevitably puts yellow into the sky, and that a wood of green trees ordinarily exhibits, in its sunlit surfaces and its shadowed surfaces, almost every color of the spectrum. Even the earlier realistic painters had practically drawn their pictures in tone—that is, in black, white and intermediate grays—and had added color not as they saw it in nature but as they *knew* it to be in an absolute sense, blue sky, green tree and red cow. They darkened the shadows with black, without noticing that shadows ordinarily harbor a multitude of pure reflected colors.

The Impressionists, of course, did not stumble upon this truth all at once and without precursors. In France, the home of good painting, the 19th Century began with a sterile classic revival, with the hard, pure draughtsmen's pictures of David and Ingres. But almost immediately Delacroix appeared with a more human note, turned classicism to theatricalism, and broke into the road that was to lead, a half-century later, to the freedom of Impressionism. Constable, in England, had begun to see shades of color in nature, and Turner was already thinking loosely in color, and in his water-colors anticipated unscientifically the feminine harmonies of Monet. But the harvest from the seed sown by these three pioneers was to be delayed another generation. In mid-century Courbet, the first passionate Realist—a bull in the China shop of French polite painting—went far toward clearing art of rhetoric and romantic ornament, and thus served modernity negatively. Followed Daumier, who is closer to the Post-Impressionist Cezanne than to the Impressionists—out of line—and Manet, who while skirting perilously close to decorative photography, completed the liberating process. In little more than a half-century painting had travelled a mighty course, out of literary-romantic illustration toward an honest objective realism, out of tinted drawing toward an art into which color entered creatively.

The Impressionists accepted the realistic limitation but became less absorbed in the object seen than in the way that object was shown up by light. Light itself became their obsession, what it struck secondary. Instead of considering a picture's subject either in the old literary associative way, or in Manet's compositional way, they saw it as an aspect. Their vision was truly visual. And of the moment. Naturally this was not an art of the studio, but of the open. And these painters were long known as the *plein air* school. After a dozen years it became apparent even to the public that painting through the many centuries of its history had been dark because it had been practiced in studios, where the subject had been overstudied until all freshness and life had gone out of



PAINTING BY PAUL SIGNAC

it. Even the Barbizon school had used blacks. Monet had really taken painting out-of-doors; for the first time it was *really* natural; this was pure beauty indeed.

And certainly the revelation of rainbow tints must have come as a rare relief to many eyes wearied by miles of gray and brown canvases. The clear color that came in with the Impressionists has stayed through practically all phases of post-Impressionism; is apparently a permanent legacy to painting. But nowadays it is seldom put on canvas as scientifically and shallowly as it was in the last quarter of the 19th Century.

The scientific basis for Monet's technique—it harks back a little to Turner and Delacroix, and its really scientific formulation came later with men variously called Neo-Impressionists, Pointillists and Divisionists—is in this: a color mixed and laid flat never looks as brilliant and alive as spots or dashes of the original colors that made up the mixture, juxtaposed on the canvas and merged by the retina of the eye at the right distance. Painters learned to disintegrate color as apparently seen in nature. They practiced juxtaposition of gobs of raw color—Divisionism.

Painting became lively, full of minute contrast, the old grays and browns gave place to chromatic patterns. It might have approached pure color creation—but it didn't, because the artists faithfully copied the colors in decomposed nature. They copied a single landscape in its every aspect of light, from dawn to dusk. The coloring was different and therefore the picture was different. If they caught the atmospheric condition of the moment, in color, the goal was won. A fleeting impression—that had something to do with the sticking of the name "Impressionists," if not with its origin.

Many things valued by the older painting disappeared. Line melted away, silhouette was impossible, form was lost in atmosphere. Color was gained, but what then? An impression of an aspect is hardly enough, even though the surface color be charming. Unity of light leaves something to be desired by way of structure, bulk, form. The Impressionists had gained color for posterity, but they had lost *organization.*

Pissarro and Monet were originators, and Monet the most famous master. His canvases are in all our big museums. His decomposed color conveys to us the fresh prettiness of nature's tenderest aspects. But in modernist company he appears spineless. Somehow we prefer, even within Impressionist ranks, the more varied and completer harmonies of Seurat—properly a Neo-Impressionist, and before his death very important as an innovator—and the gay and dashing things painted in broken color by the Americans Childe Hassam and Frederick C. Frieseke, who added a flat compositional strength to the lively technique of Monet. Frieseke's *Nude Seated,* illustrated here, marks as well as anything painted by an Impressionist, the limits to which the feminine charm of the method can be carried.

There was, of course, the luscious Renoir. He picked up the Impressionist method of disintegrating color and melting it together. But he stuck by composition, stuck by the object in its own right as against its ephemeral aspect. He restored a rhythm of line and brought back something of forced structure. He was a sort of hothouse Impressionist, whose melting tones and fluent lines intrigue us more than ever did Monet or Sisley or Signac. In his company the Impressionists seem meager, almost cold. He was a giant who is respected even by the post-Impressionists, for within the limits of a sensuous realistic art, bordering on form-creation, he was supreme—although his works that touch over into the new field were achieved rather by reflection. It is time to turn to Cezanne.

It is seldom given to an artist to make history as Cezanne has made it. Even within the century, men before him had hinted at the thing he accomplished. But he in his own work achieved a revolution. Even when he was exhibiting with the Impressionists —themselves still considered rebels—he was off seeking a thing diametrically opposed to Impressionism. They were busy with the surface—he turned the painter's eye within. They were realists. He put an end to the four-centuries reign of imitativeness in painting. Practically all the post-Impressionists acknowledge

NUDE SEATED, BY F. C. FRIESEKE

him as a master, the Cubists found the basic principle of their formula in his work, the Expressionists claim him as their own. Even in the obscurity that hid him and his work from the world through most of his life (1839-1906) a few of the world's most sensitive artists accorded him that sincerest form of compliment, imitation. And today nine-tenths of the painters who count—and the sculptors and etchers—are paying him that compliment more or less directly.

Let me digress for a moment to explain what I mean by "the painters who count." In briefest statement it is the *creative artists.* That would include the men who are leaders or pioneers: Matisse, Picasso, Derain, Kokoschka, Kandinsky—and here in America, Walt Kuhn, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, Macdonald-Wright. It would include also, the largest group, those who fail of the stature of the leaders, either by token of a slighter achievement, or not fully realized powers, or some element of imitativeness, like Othon Friesz and Marie Laurencin and Vlaminck and a dozen others in France, and the Dutchman Van Dongen, and Klee, Pechstein, Heckel, Purrmann and a score such in Germany, and the English Duncan Grant and Wyndham Lewis, and over here the bulk of our progressives: Hartley, Sheeler, Weber, Walkowitz, Stella, Davies, Sterne, Demuth, Dove and Dickinson. These all are significant men, some important for utter originality which promises more than has been achieved, others—notably Davies—as more or less conventional painters who have broadened to the modernist movement. I would go even farther in applying the term, including the whole borderland between the academy and the outlaws, from Kroll, through Bellows and Henri and Sloan and Ernest Lawson back even to Hassam and Frieseke—who stand at the very peak of original work of the last phase. But I would exclude nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand works seen at the academy exhibitions, simply because the men who paint them are not *æsthetically creative.* They are called artists, but the bulk of them are no better than color photographers, mediocre imitators of nature or of some earlier artist's style. They are competent and facile tradesmen meeting the unfailing demand for pretty imitations of natural beauty, for technical stunts, for clever anecdotes in paint. They are sincere within their limited vision, learned within the coded rules, necessary so long as culture is guarded by the conservatives of a materialistic civilization. They are typically the academicians.

Now I realize as well as the next fellow that all making of lists, all pigeon-holing of artists, is foolish, all talk of tendencies and movements childish, and particularly that to suggest boundary-lines between those who count and those who don't constitutes a hazardous sort of prophecy. All these pastimes fade into insignificance beside the accomplishment of the slightest bit of creative art work—as does all criticism. But if one becomes fairly sure he is not getting between the spectator and the picture, only pointing the way; and if he sets up theories not to pin art down but to help to an understanding: why then there seems to be little mischief in his lists and movements—and I am even flirting with the idea that the world has become so complex, permanently, that the critic, like the machine, has come to have a definite if a servile place in it. Only, like the machine, he ought to be obedient, unobtrusive, helpful.

Cezanne is the perfect antithesis to those nine hundred and ninety-nine artists whom I have described as the competent tradesmen of art—the imitative intelligences, the reasonable professionals. He ignored the world, he gave his all to his art. He not only climbed above the limitation of seeing a landscape as ordinary people, or ordinary painters, see it; he gave his whole life to trying to realize in color the emotion he felt at something he divined out of that landscape. He did not make pictures for sale—indeed it is said he more often than not threw the day's canvas into a handy ditch before reaching home. He lived to paint; individual pictures were nothing to him; his progress was marked by increasing achievement

MARSEILLES HARBOR, BY DE VLAMINCK

of the precious quality of expressive form. And he died despairing because he could not touch yet closer to pure form. So heedless was he of everything except this search that he gained for himself the reputation of being a misanthrope and even a madman, except to a very few. He evaded the draft for the war of 1870, secure through the resultant storm of criticism, in the knowledge that he was engaged in a pursuit infinitely more important. It is even recorded that he neglected to go to his own mother's funeral because he was absorbed in a painting.

Even so individual and passionate an artist, in being modern, epitomizes certain things out of the immediate and distant past. Color—he was the intimate of Pissarro, and he could hardly have revolutionized painting had not the Impressionists made their advance. But he saw through Impressionism, guessed its shallowness, and studied the masters of all times. He is credited with saying that he wanted to make something solid and durable—like museum art—out of Impressionism. One can imagine him pausing before El Greco and perhaps Tintoretto out of all the rest, and his mind working furiously at a sort of distortion there apparent, coupled with a rare sort of expression. One sees him packing off to the South of France in middle age, thus equipped, with color, with a vision of something to be realized beyond contemporary practice, beyond 19th or 18th or 17th Century achievement.

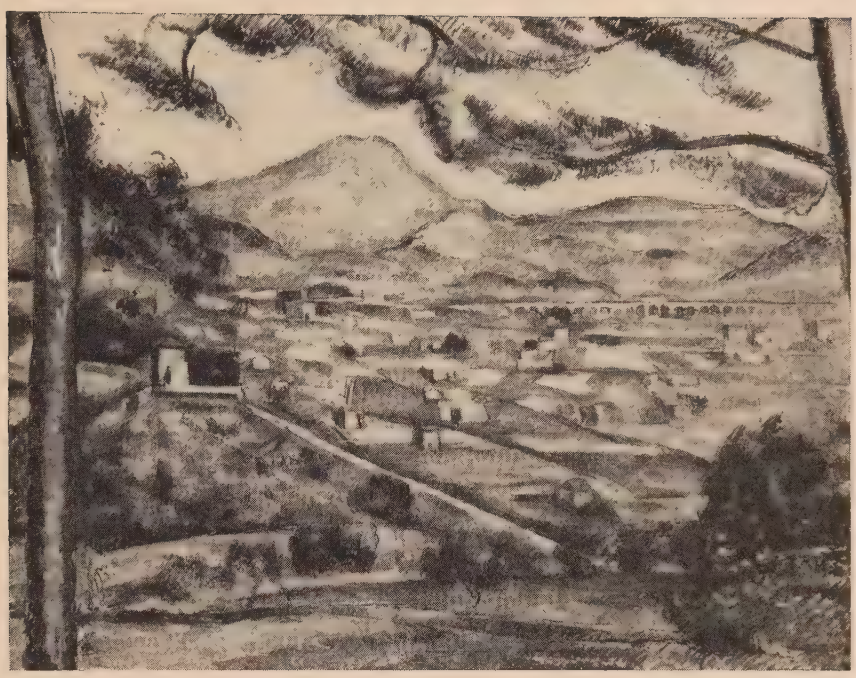
What was this thing he was after—this new thing, yet old with El Greco, differently with Michael Angelo, flamboyantly with Rubens? He called it the "realization," thus externalizing it from himself more than do the Expressionists; making it less subjective, less of him as an individual, and yet not of outward nature. He spoke much of the motive. He must penetrate nature to find it, not see the static surface but the dynamic essence. He must fix this on canvas, filter it through his passion as an artist and his craftsmanship as painter, until it was realized, as what? *Form.* That again is the only name we have for it—expressive form, significant form, voluminous form, æsthetic form.

Cezanne, being utterly disinterested in the aspects and attributes of nature, simply found nothing to hold him in the accidental prettiness of a landscape or the facial expression of a model, nothing in the atmosphere of a scene or in the revealing pose of a body. These were merely contributory bits to the larger problem of his art, and as often as not he deformed and distorted them to get the right volume or the right slope or the right organization of color. Mere composition in the flat seemed incomplete, and he felt that he had nothing to learn from his popular contemporaries, Manet and Degas, or the unpopular Gauguin. He struck through surface nature and surface composition toward something which we must accept as the nearest approach to the soul of painting: organizational form expressed in color. There, too, he surpassed all who had preceded him, for even El Greco conceived form as separate from color—added objective coloring—whereas Cezanne resolved drawing and coloring into one process. Today practically the whole world of painting recognizes them as inseparable.

In the chapter on theoretical background I showed the *Bathers* of Courbet and the *Bathers* of Cezanne side by side, as examples of the approaches of the illustrator and the seeker for form. If you are still in process of getting this crucial modernist distinction clear—and I take it you would not otherwise be reading a Primer—it will be well to turn back to pages 46 and 47 with the above paragraphs in mind. It is well to look particularly for the "recession values."

The landscape shown here is equally innocent both of the objective truth of the early realists and of the emphasized atmospheric fidelity of the Impressionists. It also lacks the clear surface compositional values of Manet or Whistler or Degas. But it has the voluminous solidity, the poised form, the dynamic movement, that belong most characteristically to Cezanne. Perhaps even more essentially the "realization" is illustrated in the watercolor reproduced at the head of the next chapter.

Painters and the more recondite critics have discovered technical



MOUNT ST. VICTOIRE, BY PAUL CEZANNE

advances in Cezanne that seem to go far to explain the means by which he was able to come so near to revelation of form: methods of using and counter-weighting line and color, concentric harmonies, stereoscopic vision, etc. But these are not for an introductory and unassuming book, and we may well turn to a brief inquiry regarding Cezanne's contemporaries and his followers.

It is easy to see parallel qualities in this landscape of Kokoschka's, although pure color is not particularly evident in his work up to 1920. Perhaps there is an illuminating point as well as an explanation in the fact that Kokoschka was less influenced directly by Cezanne than by El Greco. If more artists had traced back

LANDSCAPE, BY KOKOSCHKA

certain characteristics of the revolutionary Frenchman, qualities he had partly inherited from giants of the past, they might have become more creative on their own accounts. Such a contemporary leader as Maurice de Vlaminck smacks a little too strongly of discipleship. In his soft landscapes (see page 84) he has a pretty feeling of Cezannish movement; but one is conscious that he tricks his master a little, with an appeal too suave. But even such imitation, while not profound, is better than leadership in a phase that has passed.

Two painters are ordinarily bracketed with Cezanne as the first Post-Impressionists. They are Vincent van Gogh and Paul Gau-

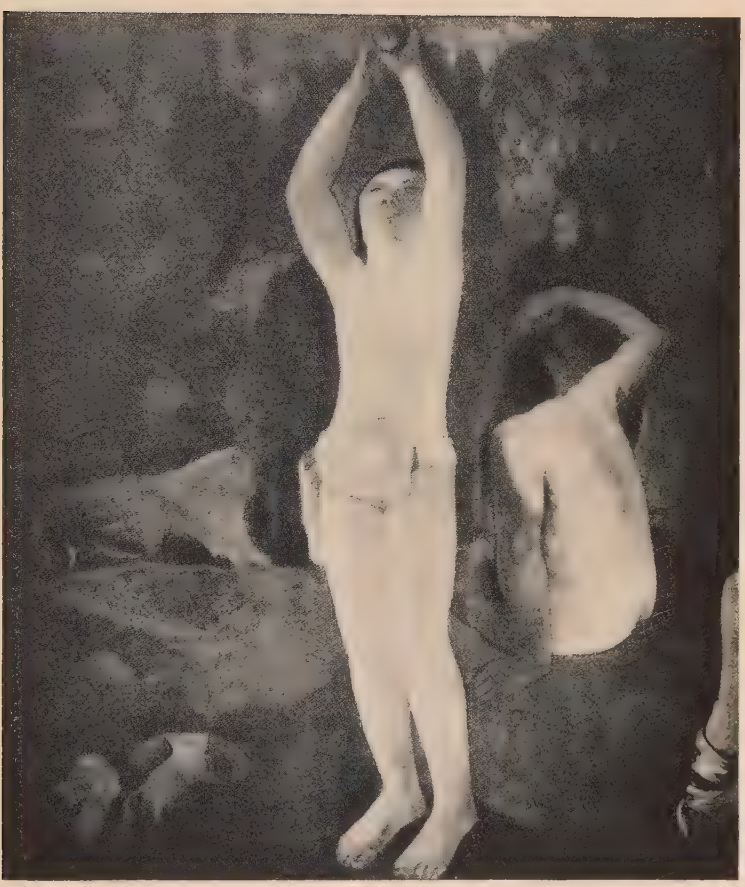
LANDSCAPE, BY VINCENT VAN GOGH

guin. Both are of slighter stature. Particularly van Gogh—or Vincent, as he preferred it—loses in regard to some of the deeper values as the perspective of the years gives greater bulk to the figure of Cezanne. But he too was a great revolutionary—if only for the joyousness with which he manipulated pure paint. Color has seldom been revelled in so absolutely, so untraditionally.

Born a Dutchman, Vincent spent the greater part of his artist-life in France, beginning as a Neo-Impressionist, an illustrationist in broken color. When he finally caught his stride, he achieved a memorable group of brilliant canvases which struck a new note in their uncompromising sincerity and their straight honesty of execution. His original method of juxtaposing long brush-strokes of fresh color endows his paintings with an extraordinary liveliness. Sometimes he failed to escape the cramping realistic vision of the artists about him and only seldom did he attain to the deeper plasticity, the voluminous counterpoint, of Cezanne. In his own right Vincent stands for a regained integrity, and a passion for colored paint on its own account. He has been the more widely talked about for the tragic circumstances of his private life. Reproductions in black and white, from his paintings, lose more than usual of the original values; but the one on the preceding page illustrates the directness and the honest emotion in his work, and affords a faint hint of the freshness of coloring. The illustration on page 93 is less typical, but certainly "modern."

Gauguin's is another story. Having got in mind the importance of Cezanne's achievement to modern painting, one is likely to be misled by trying to apply the same tests to this third great Post-Impressionist. Here one encounters the chief split in the current of modern art. With or without warrant I am going to call Gauguin's the Decorative stream. There can be no doubt that the main current flows from Cezanne. Some critics are content to cut off Gauguin as summarily as they do van Gogh. But Gauguin's achievement deserves better than that, and he did not die entirely without artistic progeny as did Vincent. There are those who claim that he discovered "form" as truly as did Cezanne.

Form in painting, if we take it to be that essential quality which is the magic of Cezanne, is a fourth-dimensional attribute. It exists beyond and independent of the three dimensions of observed nature, or the three flattened to two in Manet and other compositional painters. But Gauguin, indebted to Manet up to a point, carried the flat composition over into something approaching pure



DETAIL OF PAINTING BY GAUGUIN

decoration. If its essential quality is to be called form at all, it is form dependent on surface organization of lines, masses and colors; it is not voluminous form, dynamic poised form.

Gauguin, although frankly distorting the minor aspects of nature at times, and always broadening his work to the exclusion of detail, is not clearly of those who abandon appearance in favor of the search for an abstract æsthetic quality. He probably owed more to Giotto than to El Greco, more to Manet and to the Impressionists than to Cezanne—though there are Cezanne echoes too. He was revolutionary to the extent of turning to primitivism for a new simplicity, he abolished the Impressionist's system of applying broken color but retained color clearness, but most of all he struck a fresh note in naïve decorative appeal.

Although many people whom I respect feel that his is a shallow sort of creativeness, I cannot do less than record that he safely escaped the true realist's effort at illusion, no one before him ever made gorgeous color so reposeful, no one ever made more attractive sensuous decorations. If the organization of form in this sort of painting is comparatively rudimentary—as in most Japanese art and in Whistler—and the approach not essentially unrealistic, still the pervading emotional quality is there and the harmonious rhythm of his compositions flows more freely than ever before.

Let us say, then, that the main current of modern art, flowing on from Cezanne alone of the three original Post-Impressionists, is concerned with a fourth-dimensional sort of form that goes beyond composition; but that there is also a current of decorative effort, more superficial because it is concerned with sensuous appeal arising out of balance, rhythm and flat color rather than moving color and organizational color—and that this second stream is modern too. We shall meet it again, not by going to Gauguin's pupil, Maurice Denis, because he has lapsed into a sentimental sort of decorative illustration, but in many odd corners of our Independent shows, and, its waters mixed with those of the Cezanne stream, in Matisse—the next giant of French modernism.

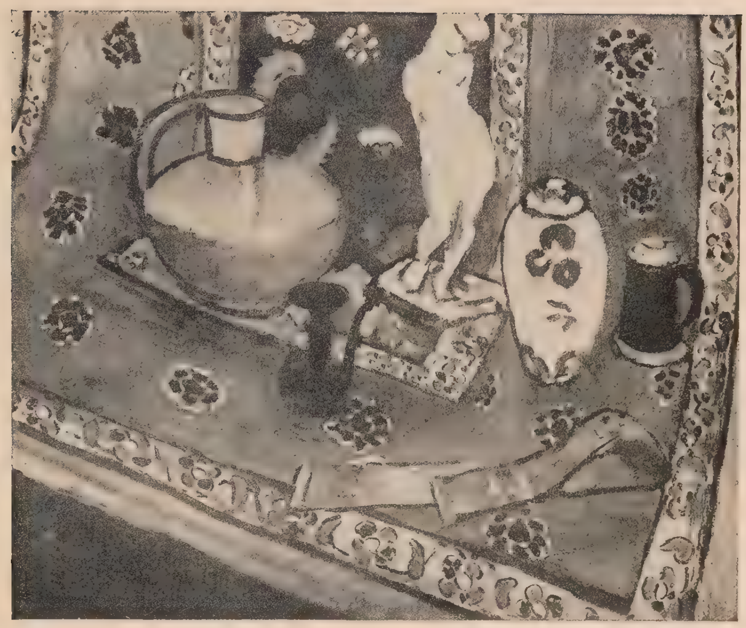
WOMAN'S HEAD,
BY VINCENT VAN GOGH

North of France, however, two other Post-Impressionists are recognized as having had great influence in shaping the course of what was later to become Expressionism. The Scandinavian Edward Munch has exerted with the rather posteresque composition of his paintings an influence not unlike Gauguin's and Vincent's toward honesty, freedom, sincerity, decorativeness—and his best work has more than a hint of Cezanne's search.

Even earlier the Swiss Ferdinand Hodler had forsaken Impressionism for a rhythmic sort of composition-painting, free from the illusion fallacy of Manet, marked by a fine directness and backgroundless simplicity. It has a remarkable note of freshness in color composition—but only occasionally is it clear that he had a grasp on the form problem. Both Munch and Hodler were closely associated with the story of German painting over the century-end, and perhaps sowed the seed later watered by a knowledge of Cezanne and the direct discipleship to Matisse and Picasso.

The chapter closes with Henri Matisse, because he more clearly than any other picked up the heritage of Cezanne and Gauguin and transmitted it to the younger generation. When he came along the Impressionists, the true revolutionaries at the beginning of the chapter, had become the academicists and the conservatives, and were subject to attack from the Neo-Impressionists, the Decorators and from a group of full-blooded realists. Out of the confusion of influences and counter-currents Matisse emerged, first with the

HEAD OF MME. CEZANNE,
BY CEZANNE



PAINTING BY MATISSE

healthy decorativeness of Gauguin, made emotionally his own, then with also, to a point, the precious form-understanding out of Cezanne. Absolutely free from literary values, striving for the naïve approach, utterly unseduced by the realistic-imitative idea, a born colorist, he was destined in any case to be a leader.

His story is best told perhaps by the four illustrations from his work. The one on page 19 is clearly an example of decorative organization in the Gauguin current, but simple, naked, as only the creative Matisse could make it. The little cut here, matched by one from Cezanne, is hardly more than a bit of pattern, and reminds one that the artist had a Persian period of influence. But it is worth study as a modern approach to abstraction too. Later on, in the chapters on Expressionism—to which he most truly belongs—are works of another sort.

But we cannot vault so easily from the first post-Impressionists to the full current of Expressionism. After Cezanne there came some widely discussed "schools" which must be recognized even in the most elementary introduction to modernism: if only for understanding of their comparative unimportance, or their value as incidental steps to present-day achievement. One cannot afford to overlook Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, and particularly the advance toward Abstraction. We shall explore those by-ways in order.

LANDSCAPE, BY LOUIS CORINTH

VI

CUBISM

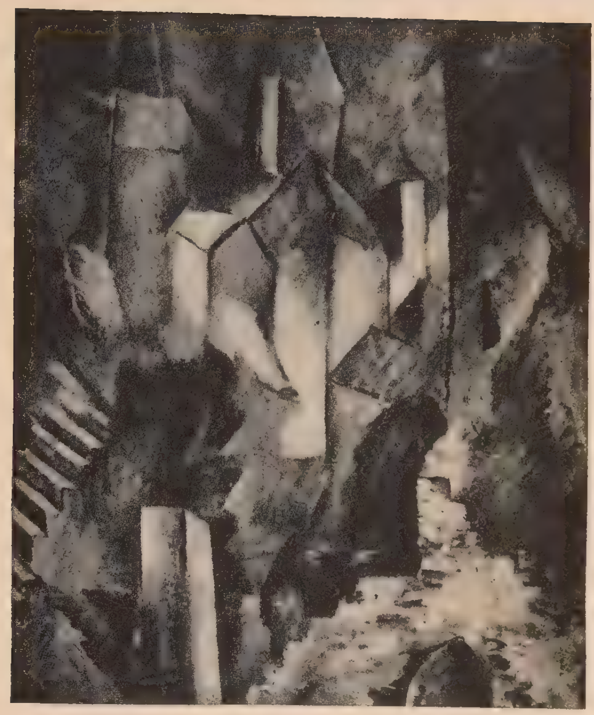
WATERCOLOR BY CEZANNE

CUBISM grew out of the post-Impressionism of Cezanne. The invention of Cubism is popularly credited to Pablo Picasso, a Spaniard who has been a leader in the French capital for many years. "Leader" is not applied in any loose sense. Picasso is a man of amazing versatility. Cubism marked but one phase of his activity. In each phase—his "blue period," his "red period," his "negro sculpture period"—he had followers and imitators; but in Cubism he instigated a world movement. Building from something out of Cezanne, doubtless with equipment out of the negro sculpture period to aid, he erected a structure which became a storm center of the modernist movement for many years.

In saying that Cubism was an outgrowth of the post-Impressionism of Cezanne, it is necessary to explain a very special significance that some critics attach to the term "post-Impressionism." In general it is used to designate those painters immediately following and rebelling from Impressionism, and for a time it was in wide currency as a term covering all currents counter to realism—although it is obviously too vague and negative for such duty. Its derivation as implied in both these uses is obviously from "*post*"—after—"Impressionism." But there is a meaning pinning it down more closely; this would apply it to art works in which not the "impression" counts, but *the artist's processes after* he receives the impression. The emphasis is thus shifted to the artist's emotion after *(post)* he has been impressed by an aspect of nature.

Although this interpretation is by no means general, it may give us a clue to the thing the Cubists are after. For if a man be geometric-minded, in a sense, if it be the structure and not any particular aspect that engages his emotions, the thing that crystallizes in him as an art "image" after the impression might well be of a more or less geometric character. Everyone who tries to analyze or describe the form-quality in a Cezanne painting comes sooner or later to the word "structure." Self-contained movement, poised form, block-relationship, organized structure, order from within—these are all catch-phrases of the commentators on Cezannism. They all imply some quality structural, geometric. Cezanne himself gave wings to the thought in something that he wrote. Picasso, receptive, inventive, fertile, brought logic and experiment to bear. At a time when he was, perhaps, particularly geometric-minded, he brought to flower Cubism.

The fundamental idea of Cubism is, I think, that it is possible to dissociate the planes of an object seen, and to rearrange them



LANDSCAPE, BY GEORGES BRAQUE

in a picture, so organized that they will give a truer emotional or structural sense than the original "appearance." One sees an object from one side; it is an incomplete vision. A complete vision would show it not only as synthesized visually from all sides and aspects, but as it is from within. Perhaps there is a mathematical equivalent for such vision. In painting it must have to do with planes. Planes must be organized, then, to express the painter's æsthetic emotion of it.

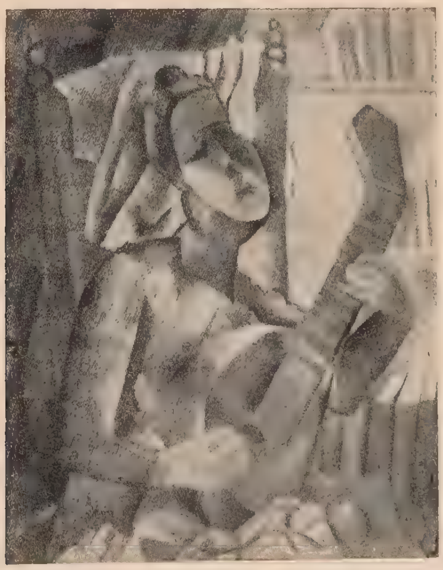
In the earlier Cubist pictures the planes seemed to be merely flattened out, and the intersections accented. The organization of

DRAWING BY PICASSO

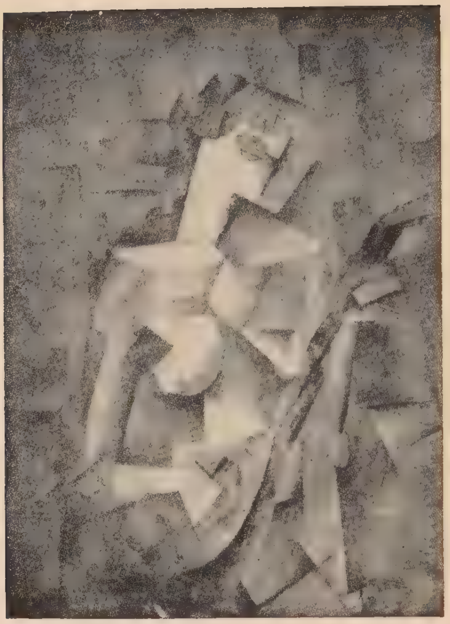
the accented lines in the picture might be decoratively creative, but in general this was merely a summary and simplified sort of illustration. Then came the phase of disorganizing the planes of reality and rearranging them in an arbitrary order. They were made to intersect and overlap at will, the structural reorganization being what counted. This took Cubism out of the category of modified surface representation and put it directly into line with Cezanne's search—in so far as anyone could link with him and renounce color. For most of the dyed-in-the-wool Cubists worked in tone, browns and grays, totally overlooking a good half of Cezanne's legacy—the knowledge that color might be made to bend a plane backward or forward, build structurally, be the backbone of æsthetic organization.

Now color organization may not be necessary for expression as we have defined it—otherwise form would never be found in sculpture, etching, etc., and we can detect it in those arts; it is indeed their reason for being. But color is a particular conditioning factor in painting. The limitation of color lack has, indeed, gone far to nullify the value of the actual paintings of the doctrinaire Cubists, although their experiments have put painting ahead.

The illustrations of this chapter show the development graphically from Cezanne to the full-fledged theoreticians of Cubism and down to the sterile decadents. The Cezanne watercolor a few pages back indicates how much that artist had to do with inspiring the



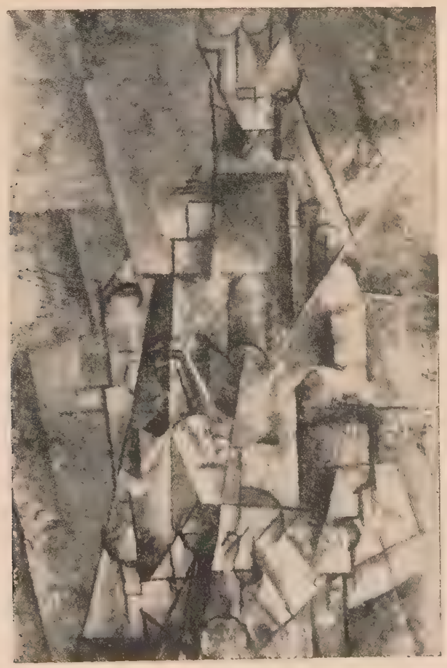
WOMAN WITH A MANDOLIN,
BY PICASSO



WOMAN WITH A MANDOLIN, BY PICASSO

movement. Then the smallest Picasso reproduction, the first *Woman with a Mandolin,* suggests the breaking-in process, the flattening of planes, the accentuation of intersections, and the occasional slight dislocation of objective planes. This was in the intermediate period, before the name "Cubism" had come into vogue and before any group or school exhibition. Even earlier Georges Braque had exhibited the *Viaduct at l'Estaque*, which is characterized by a similar treatment of planes, though more reminiscent of Cezanne. Braque became the most important of the practitioners of Cubism aside from Picasso.

The second *Woman with a Mandolin* shown here is of the period when the artists have begun to pull apart the planes of nature and reorganize them for structural purposes. Speaking entirely physically, the woman might appear more firmly structural if merely photographed as is, without being decomposed as to her planes; but there can be no doubt that Picasso has achieved some sort of abstract organization in the re-arrangement which gives the composition a formal value of its own. And if we do not find the distortion of nature too much of a petty distraction, we are likely to get a true emotional reaction from it. It is worth while to note how the overlapping of planes is manipulated, certain other planes brought forward and still others obscured, and the displacement of volumes in the background as well as in the figure. In the

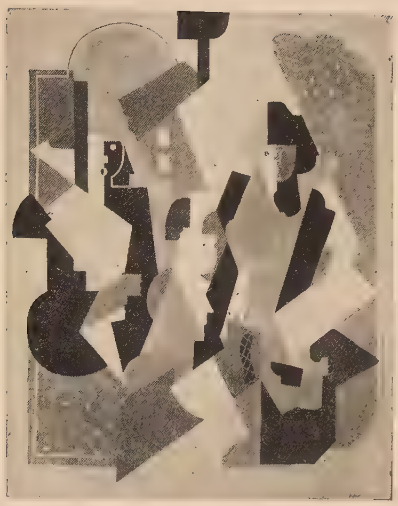


MAN WITH A MANDOLIN,
BY PICASSO

Man with a Mandolin Picasso has simply carried elimination further. I am adding (page 102) a notably sensitive "normal" drawing by Picasso, for the particular benefit of those who are accustomed to say, "Oh, the Cubists paint that way because they never learned to draw."

Picasso achieves something of a synthesis when he starts from an objective model, and his canvases invariably speak some æsthetic meaning, perhaps only in a sensuously decorative way, perhaps more deeply. At best his Cubistic pictures have undeniable, even profound, form-value. But the great mass of Cubist work outside of two or three such creative men, seems shallow and insignificant. When natural forms are broken up arbitrarily, the only excuse for their re-arrangement is creative composition, and most of the Cubists seem to arrive at only a sterile sort of intellectual puzzle-picture or a flat, rather uninteresting decoration.

Certain tenets of the Cubist faith hold much of suggestive value for the general advancement of painting. In declaring himself against the existence of any dead planes in a canvas, the Cubist hit upon a principle that will bear extensive study, for its implications of eliminating inessentials and the resultant possibility of multiplying essentials. This should logically lead to that sort of emotional intensification which is a first aim of modernism. There is also a pregnant idea behind the principle of Simultaneity. This, as advanced by the Cubists, is not to be confused with the simultaneous depiction of successive phases of movement as practiced by the later Futurists in their kinematographic painting. It is the principle of looking, in memory, at all the outward aspects of an object at once, thus getting a sort of composite or synthetic view of it.

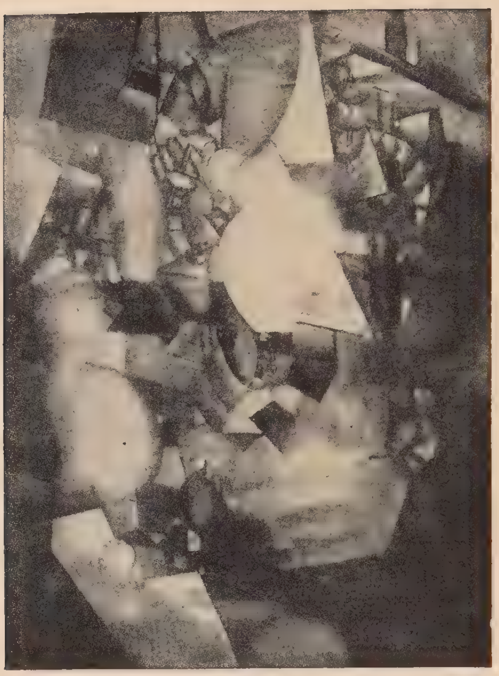


THREE PEOPLE SEATED,
BY ALBERT GLEIZES

Here again is means to intensification. But the Cubists in general, instead of letting these principles free their creative powers, made the principles their gods, followed them too logically and ended perilously close to æsthetic sterility.

Having renounced the aid of color in a desire to be truer to their abstract principles, they had lost more than half the battle as painters at the very start. (Any color will do in painting—but this was an evasion of color.) A good half of the school, moreover, became enamoured of the dogmatic notion that there is something untrue to painting in suggesting more than two dimensions. They flattened out their compositions and went off on a tack directly away from Cezanne. Nothing could be more typical of that phase than the *Three People Seated* by Albert Gleizes.

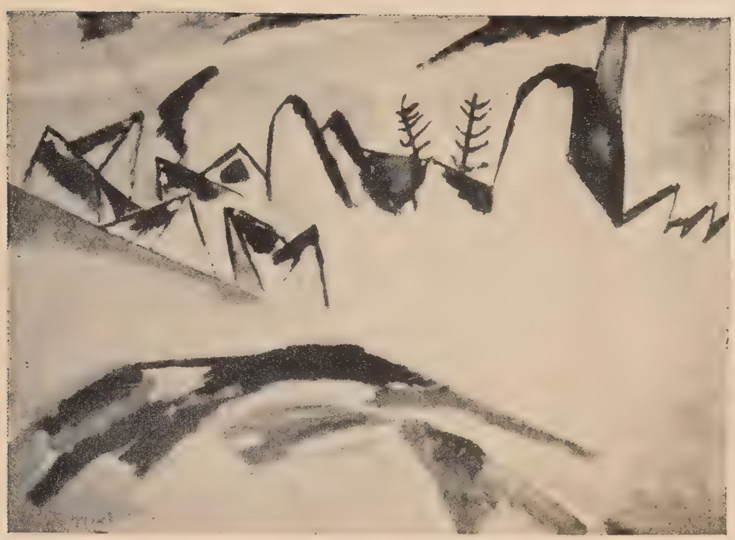
In a recent book called *Du Cubisme et des Moyens de le Comprendre,* Gleizes talks of this sort of art having touched at last the



FUMEUR ET PAYSAGE,
BY FERNAND LEGER

fundamental verities, and prophesies the future glories the Cubist painters are destined for. He wisely talks of inspiration and sensibility and an eye for synthesis as the qualitative elements in painting, but the constructive elements seem to run too much to mechanics. This one illustration of his work, however, explains his self-imposed limitations better than words. Jean Metzinger and Juan Gris are the best known of his companions in this line-and-patch sort of painting, and Francis Picabia was a disciple between his Spanish and Dada periods.

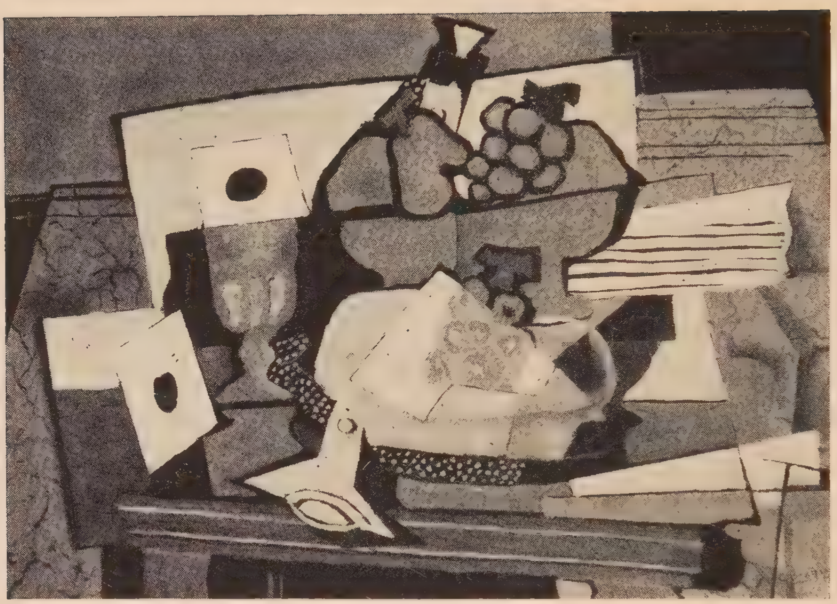
Fernand Leger goes considerably deeper, and seems to have an instinctive understanding that displacement of planes is justified



WINTER, BY KANDINSKY

only by a creative re-arrangement; that natural forms are to be used or discarded or distorted solely as demanded by the form necessities, the voluminous organization, of his picture. Leger's *Fumeur et Paysage* indicates the trend of his work and his closer affinity with Picasso, and consequently his nearer alliance with Cezanne.

It will be noticed that through the series of illustrations in this chapter we have been working closer and closer to abstraction. That indeed is the logical progression—attempted improvisation in abstract form is a final answer to the Cubist desire to disorganize objective nature. And if the average Cubist had given himself up to composition of that sort, untrammeled by his code of laws, and with color, he might live more importantly in the history of art.



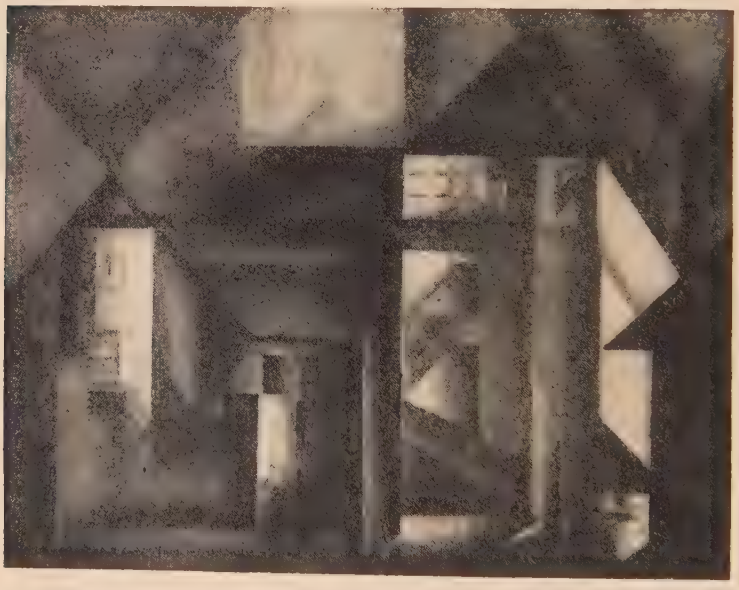
ABSTRACTION, BY GEORGES BRAQUE

We shall meet abstraction again—an entire chapter of it. Over-page I have inserted a picture by Kandinsky to suggest a connection between Cubism and that foremost "composer in musical color." Indeed it would be possible to trace lines out from the Parisian Cubists not only to the German Abstractionists but to the Russian Constructivists and Suprematists; not forgetting that beside the later French school—Ozenfant, Gris, Marcoussis, Jeanneret—and the still-later Sur-Realists, there was a belated flowering in Italy, most notably in the work of Bragaglia. It is likely, though, that Braque and Picasso will remain the master-names in what the world will remember as essential Cubism.

Certain avowed Cubists did turn back to color, and there was a special name for them: Orphists. But they seem to have been simply minor Kandinskys with inherited Cubistic limitations, and they need not engage our attention longer. Delaunay, who was connected with that group, painted also some famous disintegrated views of Paris which probably won attention more by their novelty than by profound æsthetic values. He doubtless influenced the then budding Expressionists, and he anticipated that bigness of organization which is in their canvases today; but his distortions are often too literal to escape sidetracking the spectator's attention to inessentials.

I should have said at first, perhaps, that the chief danger in approaching Cubism is to think that it means merely giving a physically cubed aspect to objective nature. In the process of simplification, solids in a Cubist picture are likely to take shape suggesting the squaring and projection of planes; and the repeated "ray" lines of some artists add suggestiveness to the name. It was Matisse who coined the term, without serious intent, and later the painters adopted it officially. A few artists have accepted the literal implications of the word. The German-American Lionel Feininger has perhaps made the straight-edge sort of composition more significant than anyone else. This *Vollersroda* illustration has caught something deeper than mere surface play.

The most valuable legacy of cubism, however, is in the indirect effect it had upon men who never subscribed to its coded principles. Many artists must have felt it a further warrant for cutting themselves off from literary and representative elements in painting; not a few, like Franz Marc, found a structural strength which lasted over, or perhaps led them into more vital work in abstraction or avowed Expressionism. Everywhere painters were led to ponder the idea of banishing dead planes and intensifying essentials. A few learned something of the principles of volumes and tensions within the picture frame. Some lesser artists lapsed from Cubistic experiment direct into the futilities of Dadaism. But the tonic of Cubism was invigorating and blood-enriching. We may even agree with Picasso who wrote in 1926 that "Cubism follows its plastic aims which are self-sufficient. . . . Cubism is neither the seed nor the germination of a new art; it is in itself a stage in the evolution of original pictorial forms. Realized, these forms have the right to an independent existence."



VOLLERSRODA, BY LIONEL FEININGER

VII

FUTURISM

CAFÉ SCENE, BY GINO SEVERINI

FUTURISM descended upon the world from Italy. It embraced at once a literary heresy, a "movement" in the graphic arts, and an extraordinary means of self-advertisement for a group of young Italian intellectuals. Its intellectual-literary origin is important, because it goes far to explain why Futurism became a world's wonder and an influence on the development of painting, although no one ever saw a Futurist painting that had values profounder than novelty, arresting color or shallow decorative effectiveness.

The Futurists have been the champion manifesto-makers of all the schools of modernism. Their leader—both spokesman and

MARINETTI, BY KULBIN

financial sustainer—the poet Marinetti, had the manifesto habit. A Futurist manifesto was likely to be nine-tenths anarchism and good old-fashioned bunk, and one-tenth shrewd and forward-looking thought about art. The rapid periodic appearance of these literary bombs had two good effects: the shock jolted loose a lot of belated Impressionists, dogma-bound Cubists and blind followers of Cezanne, and started them to seeking on their own account; and the fraction of artistic truth, although unrealized in the works of the five chief Futurist painters, gave impetus to the theoretical current toward pure painting.

It was Gordon Craig who said: "There has been a positive *need* for the Futurists ever since the first ass wagged its tail before the portrait of a carrot." There one has a reason indeed. The Futurists or anyone else should be listened to if they promise an escape from dull photographic painting, no matter what the substitute. Craig goes on to point out that their substitute is only a portrait of chaotic civilization as it has become: snapshots of the "noises, jerks and squirms" of the external world we live in, in place of snapshots of the girl with the parasol, the nude model, the fish and copper kettle, the wintry landscape, which have crowded academy halls for generations. The ironic point is that Futurism, in that it concerned snapshots at all, reverted to 17th-18th-19th Century art, returned to representation, denied Cezanne, negated the future.

The statements of the Futurists are likely to begin self-consciously like this: "We are young and our art is violently revolutionary." Then follow their respects to the Cubists and other outmoded radicals. "They obstinately continue to paint objects motionless, frozen, and all the static aspects of nature. . . . We, on the contrary, with points of view pertaining essentially to the future, seek for a style of motion, a thing which has never been attempted before us. . . . To paint from the posing model is an absurdity, and an act of mental cowardice, even if the model be translated upon the picture in linear, spherical or cubic forms."

The matter of motion is, indeed, always at the bottom of their picture making, ranging from mere photographed outward action to experiments with dynamic "force-lines." The first Futurist manifesto began:

1. Our desire for the truth no longer contents itself with form and color as heretofore understood.

2. What we wish to reproduce on the canvas is not an instant or a moment of immobility of the universal force that surrounds us, but *the sensation of that force itself.*

3. As a matter of fact everything moves, everything runs, everything transforms rapidly. A profile is never immobile before us, but it appears

and disappears without ceasing. Given the fact of the momentary persistence of the image on the retina, objects in movement multiply, change form and follow like vibrations in space. A running horse has not four legs, but twenty, and their movements are triangular.

4. Nothing is absolute in painting. That which was a truth for the painters of yesterday, is a lie for those of today. We declare, for example, that a portrait should not resemble its sitter, and that the painter carries in his own imagination the landscape he wishes to place upon the canvas.

5. To paint the human figure it is not necessary to paint the *figure* but simply to give its *envelopment.* Space does not exist. Millions of miles separate us from the sun, yet that is no reason why the house before us should not be incased in the solar disk. In our work we can secure effects similar to those of the X-ray. Opacity does not exist. . . .

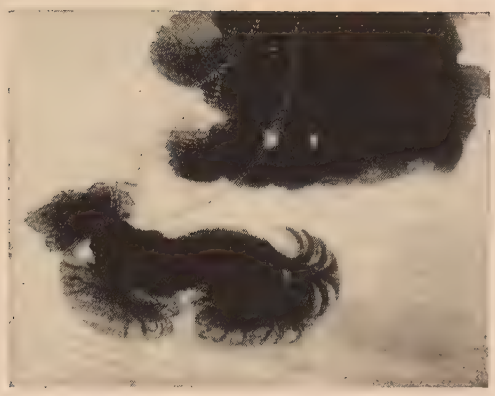
The sixteen persons about us in a moving omnibus are *in turn* and *at the same time*, one, ten, four, three; they are immobile and yet move; they go, come, bounding along the street, suddenly lost in the sun, then return seated before you, like *so many symbols persistent of universal vibration.*

How often it happens that upon the cheek of the person with whom we are talking we see the horse that passes far away at the end of the street. Our bodies become parts of the seat upon which we rest and the seat becomes part of us. The omnibus merges in the houses that it passes, and the houses mix with the bus and become part of it.

6. The construction of pictures up to this time has been stupidly traditional. Painters have always shown things and persons *before* us. We place the spectator *in the midst* of the picture.

Heretofore we have looked *at* pictures; it is the idea of the Futurist that we should look *through* them, that the pictures should give us *new visions* of life and things, new sensations, new emotions. . . .

Some of the Futurist painters seem never to have read beyond the third paragraph in this manifesto. At any rate Giacomo Balla



MOVING DOG IN LEASH,
BY GIACOMO BALLA

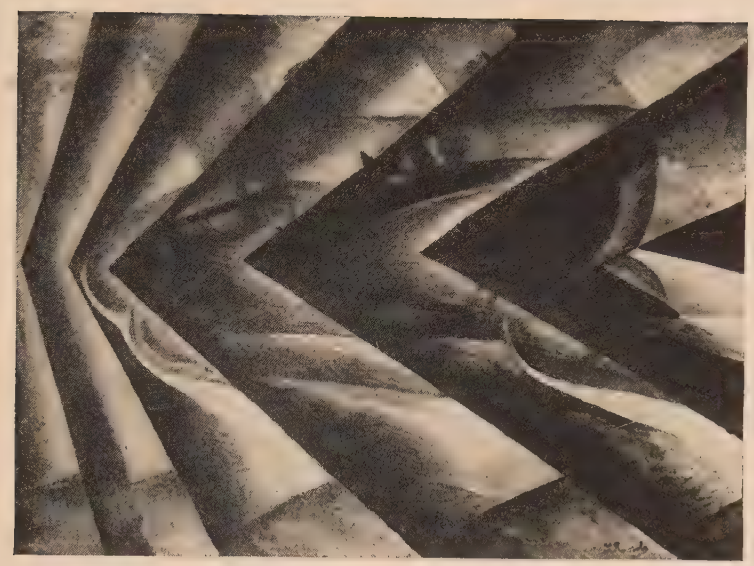
gives us pretty illustrations of objects in action with repeated outlines indicating movement, blurring away at the edges like photographs that have not been snapped quickly enough. What a juvenile conception of art this was is indicated in the *Moving Dog in Leash* above. But it illustrates a basic principle of Futurism.

The point that "opacity does not exist" and the attempt to "place the spectator in the midst of the picture" are illustrated in the dance scene of Severini's at the head of the chapter. There is here not merely simultaneous recording of recurrent aspects of a moving object, as in Balla's elementary work, but an intriguing puzzle-layout of bits remembered, repeated, pattern-arranged. Elsewhere the Futurists have recorded: "The simultaneousness of states of mind in the work of art: that is the intoxicating aim of our art. . . . In painting a person on a balcony, seen from inside the room, we do not limit the scene to what the square frame of the window renders visible; but we try to render the sum total of visual sensations which the person on the balcony has experienced; the sunbathed throng in the street, the double row of houses which stretch to right and left, the beflowered balconies, etc. This implies the simultaneousness of the ambient, and, therefore, the dislocation and dismemberment of objects, the scattering and fusion of details, freed from accepted logic, and independent from one another."

Here, of course, the true Futurist simultaneity of action is added to the Cubist idea of synthetic simultaneity of remembered static aspects. Gino Severini, whose dance scene so perfectly illustrates the point, later turned Cubist of the Gleizes type—although more recently he has reverted to a sort of mathematical classicism.

The third portion of the original manifesto includes a series of declarations against imitation, the tyranny of "harmony" and "good taste," art critics, bituminous colors, false modernism, and the nude in painting—this last not on moral grounds, but because of the monotony of our "galleries of portraits of disreputables." This portion of the document contains also two constructive points: "That it is necessary to brush aside all the subjects already used, in order to adequately express our turbulent life of steel, of pride, of feverish rapidity." And "that the universal force must be shown in painting as a *sensation dynamic*."

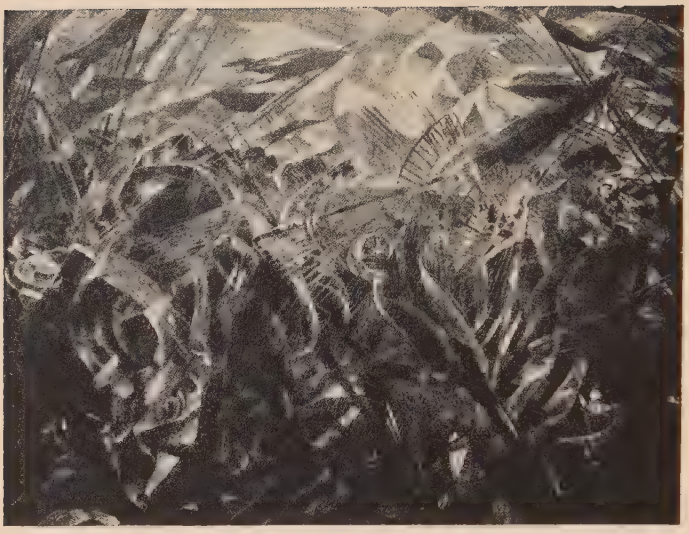
The supposition that dealing with modern subjects—steel and rapidity—will make a modern art, is as childish as the theory of recording simultaneity of successive movements. A creative artist's picture may as well be evoked by something out of Babylon as something out of an airplane or a motor car. But out of the "dynamic sensation" idea the Futurists developed a new sort of illustration. It *is* illustration, because you are no nearer to æsthetic



DYNAMISM OF AN AUTO, BY RUSSOLO

creation when you are merely recording force lines than when you are painting academically the objective aspects of nature.

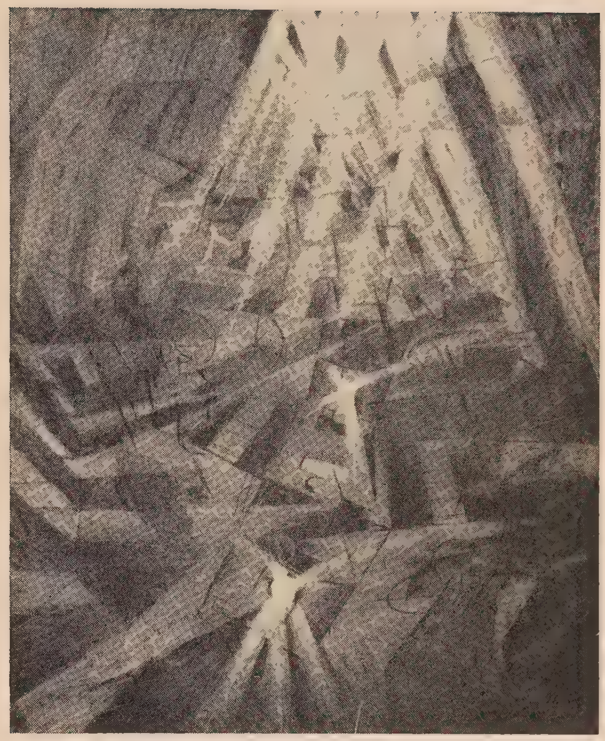
If the Futurists had grasped all they were after by way of rhythm, it might be a different story. "We have declared in our manifesto that what must be rendered is the *dynamic* sensation, that is to say, the particular rhythm of each object, its inclination, its movement, or, to put it more exactly, its interior force." But they limit themselves by discovering that "every object reveals by its lines how it would resolve itself were it to follow the tendencies of its forces"; and when they actually paint they bring forth things like Russolo's *Dynamism of an Auto,* wherein the recorded force lines *are* the design. Russolo made a formula of the repeated angles of this picture. The same diagram would answer for his *Train at Full Speed* and his *Revolution.*



FUNERAL OF THE ANARCHIST GALLI,
BY CARRA

Farther removed from mere "motion effects" is the work of Carlo D. Carra. The sense of movement in the other pictures shown has been on the surface. There is more real movement, in an æsthetic sense, in one of Cezanne's paintings than in anything that the Futurists have left to us. But Carra had at least a glimmer of the deeper thing.

What then is the real heritage to painting out of Futurism? The emphasis on modern life, in spite of the Futurists' own lapse to mere illustration, had its salutary effects. The general shaking-down process, following the shock of the manifestoes and the first exhibitions, also contributed to the impulse of the modernist movement. A few principles, like that of getting inside the picture, live on. The futility of the general practice of the coded laws may have

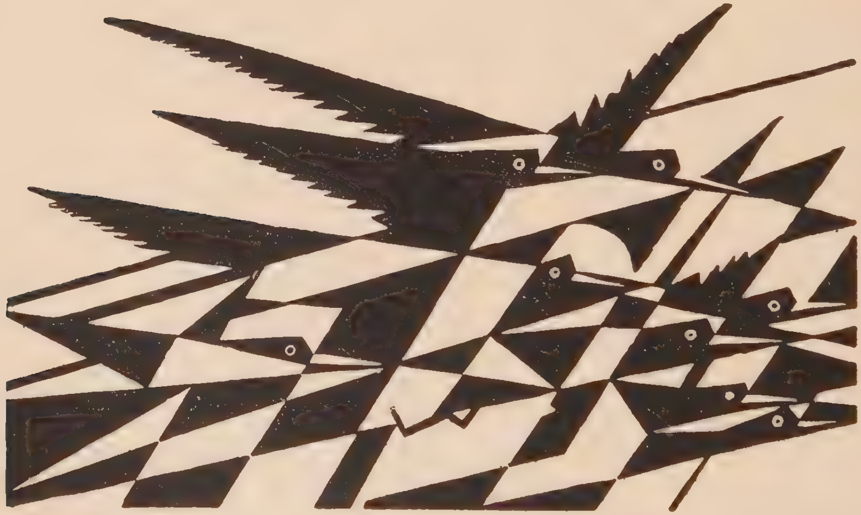


DYNAMISM OF A STREET,
BY BOCCIONI

led some painters to a closer grapple with the mysteries of abstraction. But roughly speaking Futurism blew up, because the world came to recognize that it embraced a return to straight representation. And the full current of progress is in the opposite direction.

America has perhaps the most effective contemporary practitioner of Futurism, in Joseph Stella, an Italian-American—and even he is more significant for other phases of his varied talent. His *Brooklyn Bridge* is reproduced on page 65. The English Nevinson went through a Futurist period, but one feels that the virus didn't really take. The Vorticists have been accused of being merely decadent Futurists, but that is hardly fair.

Boccioni was sculptor as well as painter. His statues have always seemed to me a pulling-to-pieces of plastic form, instead of mass organization. They make sculpture look choppy, even disintegrated. One quite prefers that sort of elementary repeat-line Futurism, occasionally applied to sculpture, which the Germans call "Kinetismus." At least it has honest surface values in its unassuming and amusing cleverness. Of that sort of cleverness is the use to which E. McKnight Kauffer put Futurist ideas in this tailpiece, called *Flight*. Cleverness just about measures the depth of Futurism. Cezanne and Kokoschka and Marin have never been clever.



VIII

SCHOOLS, FADS AND SENSATIONS

PEGASUS, BY ODILON REDON

THE picture here is not in the slightest Cubistic or Futuristic; nor is it obviously related to the sort of modernist painting that flowed from Cezanne through Matisse to the "Junge Kunst" groups in many lands. It has beauty of a sort, even in this reproduction which does not show the lovely coloring. We may well pause to ask, is this modern art?

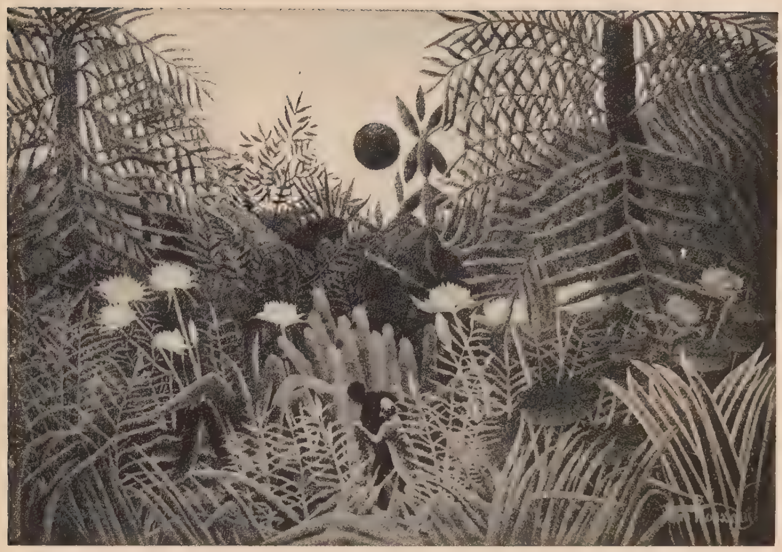
There are two special sorts of difficulty for a critic who is fool enough to try to interpret for his readers a world "movement" in art. One exists in the possibly two or three important artists in each generation who defy classification with any current or tendency—who are out of time altogether. The other exists in the necessity to pause and explain away certain minor "schools" that arise, and by the sheer noise of their shouting, or the startling nature of their painting, shock the world into attention for a period. I, the fool in this case, have set aside this chapter to get out of the way such sensations as Vorticism, Dadaism and Tatlinism—and to say a word about one or two unrelated giants who simply cannot be overlooked.

The picture on the opposite page shows a painting by Odilon Redon, a French painter who died a few years ago. He was thus a contemporary of the Impressionists and of the post-Impressionists —from Cezanne to Picasso. But he might just as well have lived out of time and place. He was a true Independent.

Redon's art, reveling in a rare glory of fresh coloring, has to do with life in its dreamiest aspects, as if one might lie forever looking at a cloud, or a butterfly, or a woman's breast, or an orchid. His paintings tempt one to think that art may after all exist in legends and delicate experience, rather than in some independent living æsthetic truth: that one may imitate living things (or imagined and legendary things), and score as creative artist if one's selective sense is fastidious enough, one's touch lyric enough. Redon avoided the vulgarly dramatic; in an age when realism was only beginning to be challenged, he tempered his own realism with poetry, with melody, with living in the secret places. He had the grace to walk clear of all the materialistic things in nature, letting an imaginative music drown the horrible and common sounds that seem to have been in the ears of most painters of his time.

Such art as his marks not an intenser entry into life, but a sensitive withdrawal from life. That alone is enough to separate it from the burgeoning art of today. But there is, too, the fact that his painting is essentially on the side of imitation as against expression. It may be that painting the spiritual aspect of an object will become the pursuit of some new modernism of the future. Then Redon will be looked back to as a master. But as long as the present current flows, seeking form within the canvas before all else, no matter how many intermingled minor currents there may be, Redon will be an outsider. He was not giant enough to turn the current. But let it be added, he was an outsider whom the out-and-out modernists respected—and upon whom, I think, they still cast now and then a rather wistful glance.

A second Independent, who is even more important historically, and who made a contribution intrinsically valued as highly as Redon's, was Henri Rousseau. His canvases are particularly treasured by those who find relief from the dullness, self-consciousness and pretension of academy art in a child-like naïveté and detachment. Rousseau throughout his life was perfectly the child-man,



EXOTIC LANDSCAPE, BY HENRI ROUSSEAU

with apparently an incorruptible child's-freshness. He was untroubled by any respect for naturalness, perspective or any other traditional rule or quality of painting, and he frankly gave himself up to his somewhat limited fancy. He was less the Primitive with whose virtues he has been reproached, than the imaginative child who delights in fixing the features of Aunt Molly stiffly into the wholly arbitrary foliation of a romantic garden, or placing fanciful beasts in exotic and luscious forests. He treated familiar landscapes or people with other-worldly aloofness, or wandered in imaginative gardens and woods such as one is supposed to cease imagining when one graduates into grammar school. It was this child mind, and its pictures, that drew to Rousseau *le Douanier* the friendship and the praise of many of the foremost artists and critics of the Paris of ten or twenty years ago. They appreciated his work for much the same reason that lay behind their deification of negro sculpture: it was direct, simple, immediate, the fruit of an unspoiled emotional approach to art.

The influence of Rousseau was very great for a time, although it has waned a little in the last ten years. His sort of art will always find ready appreciation where people are revolting from too much tradition and too much sophistication. It has a quiet and fresh charm that comes gratefully in the midst of so much virtuosity and striving. But if one took to it for a steady diet, one might begin to detect an anachronistic note in it—or perhaps a lack of a certain fullness that belongs to these times. Never to go beyond it would seem like loving only seventeen-year-old girls all one's life.

In America there have been many artists who have gone through a Rousseau-influenced period—and a mighty good tonic it is too, if an artist can get back to that clearness of vision—and a few have remained there, although as yet without achieving the authentic naïveté through any long and important series of works. New York is fortunate in having a gallery—that of Stephan Bourgeois—where a collection of these "detached" and fanciful paintings can always be seen: utterly simplified and flatly colored compositions by Emile Branchard, shy little drawing-paintings by Jennings Tofel, delicate flower studies and poetic abstractions by Joseph Stella, and a wide range of similar unsophisticated and remote excursions. All these are undoubtedly in the direct line of protest against naturalism, and charming, but as a collection they seem to some of us to be a little off the main road of progress, too ascetically aside from the intensely emotional, dynamic art of the rich life of today. Like

Redon's works, those of Rousseau and his followers must be marked as out of the main current because they smack of a delicate withdrawal, a sensitive return, rather than of a meeting with the conditions of modern life.

If the vogue for Rousseau has a little passed—there will always happily be worshippers at his shrine—there is another vogue apparently developing, for the very beautiful work of Georges Seurat. He used to be called a Neo-Impressionist, and his paintings were largely lost to public sight after his death, when the Divisionists were being eclipsed by the excitement over the original post-Impressionists and the *Fauves*. But now painters and critics are rediscovering that Seurat used his color in a new and extremely effective way, and apparently was headed for compositional achievements beyond those of any of his predecessors except Cezanne. He evolved his delicate technique out of Impressionism, but he added an un-Impressionistic solidity of organization; and in his later work he coupled a feeling for moving form with a rainbow-tint freshness of coloring. There is in these paintings what I can only describe as an opalescent "underlay"—as if over or beyond the compositional thing there is an enriching counterplay of color. It is a quality that has been achieved elsewhere only by Ernest Lawson, among all the artists I can call to mind. This sort of color wizardry is what served to place Lawson foremost among American landscapists—so that he is head and shoulders above the rather literal group of belated Impressionists from which he stems. Another American who has attained to a very individual sort of Neo-Impressionism is Maurice Prendergast. He composes virile color-pattern paintings which have done much to enliven our too-dull exhi-

LA BAIGNADE, BY GEORGES SEURAT

bition halls these many years. But both Lawson and Prendergast are individualists with definite limitations—whereas Seurat gives promise of very strongly affecting a wide group of important young painters.

There are probably many Englishmen who will ask why Augustus John is not similarly an independent giant, demanding a giant's due, like Redon, Rousseau and Seurat. I rather think John will not last in his own niche so long as these others in theirs—it is equally clear that he is outside the main discussion. He did much to rescue English painting out of tag-end Impressionism and native sentimental realism; he brought a new note of vigor and color and simplicity, but it is not so clear that he escapes an academicism as blighting ultimately as the sort he revolted from. His early works had a daring simplicity and directness; but he fell on the decorative side of the fence. He must be reckoned in, but one feels, rather regretfully, that what might have developed into a creative feeling for color-form turned instead into a posteresque talent.

It is rather for one of the sensations of the school sort that I am turning to England here. Vorticism was a purely British development in locale, although an American and a Frenchman, resident in London, together with one Englishman made most of the noise and had most of the talent. In the visual arts, the sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska was the one real genius of the group, and he was taken away in the war when he was just beginning to show his true greatness. Ezra Pound linked the school to Imagism in poetry, and did much to argue the development into alignment with the course of modern art. And Wyndham Lewis, chief painter of the group and its most consistent spokesman, has made significant contributions to modern experiment in painting.

The Vorticists joined with their predecessors the Futurists in making war on the Cubists. No more *nature-morte;* no more posed model. They also wisely judged that although Futurism was more modern in a purely jazzy way, the Futurist painters tended to become pedants and illustrators of motion. (The common English conservative habit of calling the Vorticists themselves merely a special brand of Futurist, probably arose from ignorance of real Futurism, the term being used as a sort of handy all-round term of opprobrium for radicals.) The Vorticists also took care to shy a bomb or two at the abstract Expressionism advocated by Kandinsky, feeling that there was something dead about what they called spook

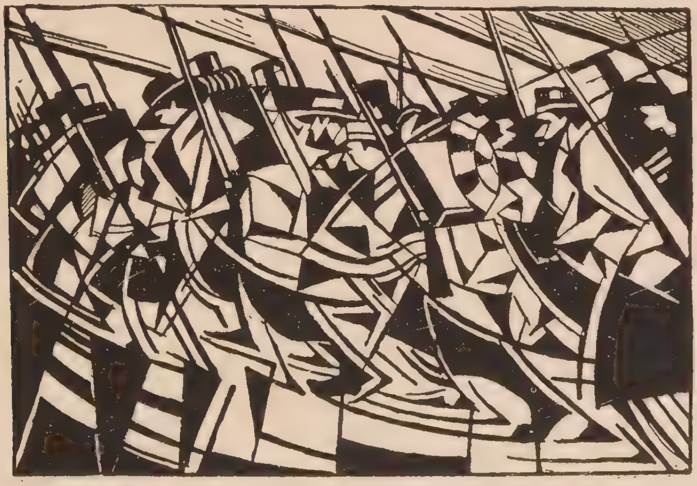
WAR-TIME PROGRAM COVER,
BY WYNDHAM LEWIS

composition, just as there was something dead about the Cubists' *nature-morte.*

They began with the theory that every painting must be in some slight sense representative. But: "The first reason for not imitating nature is that you cannot convey the emotion you receive at contact of nature by imitating her, but only by becoming her. . . . The essence of an object is beyond, and often in contradiction to, its simple truth. . . . The sense of objects, even, is a sense of the *significance* of the object, and not its avoirdupois and scientifically ascertainable shapes and perspectives. If the material world were . . . organized as in the imagination, we should live as though we were dreaming. Art's business is to show how, then, life would be. . . . Imitation, and inherently unselective registering of impressions, is an absurdity. It will never give you even the feeling of the weight of the object, and certainly not the meaning of the object or scene which is its spiritual weight."

The search, then, is for the "spiritual weight" of the object, its essence, its significance; and for the conveying of that. (I have been quoting from Wyndham Lewis in the Vorticist periodical *Blast.*) But there is some haziness about the means, and Vorticist paintings and drawings seem only to confuse the issue. *Rigidity* has something to do with their method of painting—(their drawings are in general deadly mechanical and unemotional)—and again and again they stress the idea of "spiritual weight."

As to the Vortex, that seems to have to do with the object itself and its seeing rather than with the painter's mode of expression. Lewis writes: "The natural culmination of 'simultaneity' is the reformed and imaginatively co-ordinated impression that is seen in a Vorticist picture. In Vorticism the direct and hot impressions of



ON THE WAY TO THE TRENCHES,
BY C. R. W. NEVINSON

life are mated with Abstraction, or the combinations of the Will."

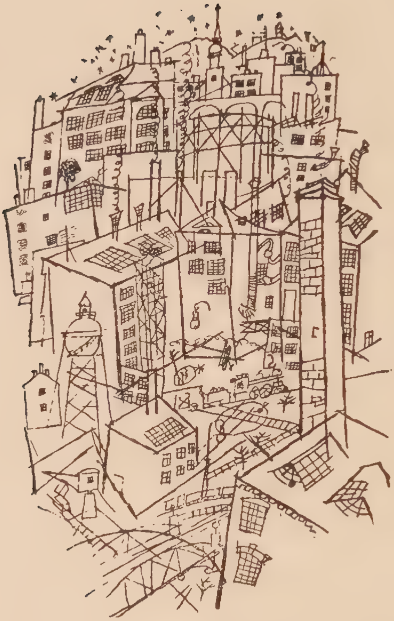
Ezra Pound elucidates the thing further. He dismisses Futurism as merely "accelerated Impressionism." He describes Imagism in poetry, explaining the Imagist's direct, absolute and unrelenting approach to the "thing," whether objective or subjective. From that he works over to an analogous visual art in Vorticism. "The Vorticist uses the 'primary pigment.' Vorticism is art before it has spread itself into flaccidity, into elaboration and secondary applications. . . . Vorticism is an intensive art. . . . The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a *vortex,* from which, and through which, and into which, ideas are constantly rushing. In decency one can only call it a *vortex.* And from this necessity came the name 'Vorticism.' " And again Pound defines the vortex as "the point of maximum energy," and speaks feelingly of "works of the first intensity."

Is it not clear, dear reader?

Having seen more Vorticist paintings and drawings, perhaps, than most of my readers, I may be able to help by venturing a summary. It is that the Vorticist believes that there is an absolute quality, a spiritual or essential characteristic, in every object; and he strives to express this while his emotion over discovering it is red-hot; and his means are purged of sentiment, elaboration or ornamentation and tend to a special rigidity and machine-like hardness. The "vortex" is of the object—the "form" in which or out of which it is drawn—and the vortex is also the artist's will, the suction, the magnetic quality which pulls to the object or swallows the object. But I confess that the hardness often repels me, leaves me little sense of formal structure artistically complete.

MINERS' BAR, BY GEORG GROSZ

Then I run across a sentence like this in Ezra Pound's explanation: "The *organization of forms* is a much more energetic and creative action than the copying or imitating of light on a haystack" —and I see that the Vorticists really had the key to the modern structure. Then I look back at their works and I think that they were too muddied up in their own minds to use the key consistently. And I end by muttering something like this: Either they didn't know what they were doing, and so aren't really important, or else they actually did see the form-problem as the essential quest but weren't up to truly creative practice, and therefore still aren't important—and anyhow, if they *did* have *that* key buried away in a blanket of wordiness, they would be Expressionists, and then what's the use of setting themselves off with a special cryptic name like "Vorti-



FACTORIES, BY GEORG GROSZ

cists"? I have seen paintings by Lewis that appealed to me as the finest Expressionistic things done by an Englishman—very individual and very expressive—but how Vorticist I couldn't discover.

In the War Number of *Blast* I find the drawing by C. R. W. Nevinson entitled *On the Way to the Trenches,* which is shown a few pages back. Nevinson never was unreservedly admitted to the Vorticist ranks, and this picture is merely a clever Futuristic illustration. But when I compare it with the real Vortex goods in the publication, it seems to me that the Vorticists' drawings are equally shallow, and not even redeemed by the reflective representative interest and the cleverness. Many of them are merely second-rate reflective Cubism. There is a suspicion about, that Vorticism was the English substitute for the irresponsible movement called elsewhere "Dadaism." There were the same symptoms of noise, paradox, and almost incomprehensible "art." But the Wyndham Lewis group was never guilty of the perverse, utterly outrageous and cynical deviltries perpetrated by Tristan Tzara, Francis Picabia, Kurt Schwitters and their bunch.

Dadaism was an artistic and literary movement that became a sensation in Berlin, Paris and other Continental cities in 1919-1920. There is a tendency now to trace the origin to New York, on account of the influence of jazz on popular world art. America did, indeed, contribute some Dadaish journals before the European crop, but these were only feebly nonsensical as compared with later developments. Francis Picabia, later chief Dadaist, had been on this side, and had been associated with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray in publishing "291."

The conception of Dadaism might be traced back to people and events long antedating the great war, perhaps to the *fin-de-siecle* generation of Beardsley and Wilde. But the war and its ruins were the immediate precipitating cause. Thus M. André Gide, editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française,* once exclaimed: "What! While our fields, our villages, our cathedrals have suffered so much, our language is to remain untouched! It is important that the mind should not lag behind matter; it has a right, it too, to some ruins. Dada will see to it."

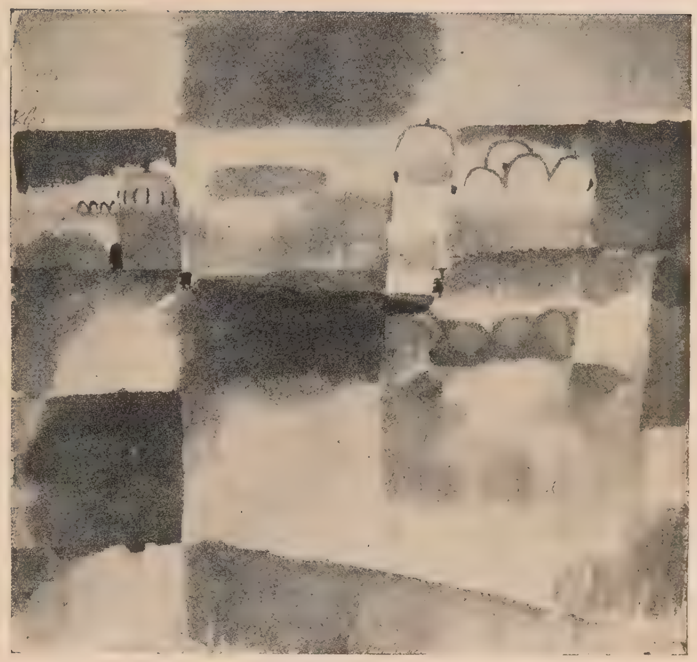
The war fathered the child. Tristan Tzara is generally credited with doing the rest. The christening, if not the birth, took place in Zurich. In the light of subsequent events, which have probably outrun even M. Tzara's anticipations, the name seems to have been chosen with uncanny canniness. The original meaning of "Dada" in the French is "hobby-horse"; but the associations the word has taken on through recurrence as the first spoken syllables of millions of generations of infants are rich beyond compare.

Dadaist "art" aims above all else at novelty, sensation, shock. "Dadaist portraits," wrote a Paris correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor*, "resemble nothing so much as an old-fashioned plate of clam chowder, seen from above." F. S. Flint once complained that Dadaist poetry, good or bad, "never says anything—it merely makes a noise." He was reviewing Tzara's poem beginning:

> "a e ou o youyouyou i e ou o youyouyou
> drrrrdrrrrdrrrrgrrrrgrrrrgrrrrrrr
> bits of green duration flutter in my room
> a e o i ii i e a ou ii ii belly
> ambran bran bran and restore
> center of the four
> beng bong beng bang . . ."

Mr. Flint's comment on M. Tzara's verse has an application to all Dada art: "It has a *cachet* of its own and its own species of unintelligibility. . . . His sincerity is such that he dumps his personality in front of the world without reserve or arrangement. He shoots it as a scavenger shoots rubbish, and his style is strictly adequate."

There has been, indeed, an overplus of noise and an underplus of reserve and arrangement in almost everything accomplished under



WATERCOLOR—TUNIS, BY PAUL KLEE

the Dada banner. If that were all, we could drop the matter here. But one finds an artist like Paul Klee joining the Dada ranks, our own Joseph Stella claiming to belong, and a draughtsman like Georg Grosz turning straight Dada. It is necessary to look deeper.

There seem to be three explanations of the phenomenon. The first is that all Dadaists are crazy: that their humor is either nonsensical or diabolical, their art accidental, their bits of accomplishment the chance stumblings of the madman. This is the most widely-held opinion. After reading a single Dada journal, any person prejudiced in favor of sanity will find ample grounds for accepting this view. The second and opposite explanation is that behind a mask of irresponsibility and humor there stands a calculating and unlaughing monster; that beyond the apparent purposelessness there is a deadly serious intelligence, with the ultimate aim of undermining civilization by destroying its props—art, culture, religion and militarism.

But there is a third, and to me more plausible, explanation: that it is only human for a certain number of people to be crazy, some in the way that gets them into "retreats," others who only occasionally get "crazy with the heat," others only as crazy as the average artist is; and it is equally human for a lot of other folks to get awfully serious, to take culture seriously, to be patriotic, martyrs, college professors, etc. And there is a class that combines characteristics out of both the others. Then there comes a thing like the war, that upsets all the values, and a lot of these people get het-up to an extraordinary degree. . . . And there emerges a Dada movement, of which nine-tenths of the manifestations look crazy and probably are meant to look crazy; and irreverence shows itself all over the place; and behind it are all the incompetents and near-thinkers and degenerates and cynics and roisterers who always tag on to the "latest" movement, and along with them a few creative geniuses, and a little group of disillusioned clear thinkers directing the center of the current because they really see that it is necessary to discredit Bourgeois culture, academic seriousness and decadent society; who are willing to assume the mask of insanity with the real irresponsibles to cloak the laughing but serious purpose of reducing to absurdity the pretensions of the Bourgeois elect.

The war, with its lesson of ghastly futility, accomplished Dadaism politically; the ruins, then, must merely be brought into the fields of mental activity. The most serious of intellectual achievements must be seen as the most horrible—for what would the war have been without the refinements of scientific murder, and without the blessing and impetus of the learned professions? Destroy the civilization that begot that horror, scratch the veneer of respectable education, show culture its own hypocrisies and dullnesses. As for art, use the arts to kill the arts; reduce the intellectualized sentimentalism and "realism" of literature to the infantilism and vulgarity which they really are when stripped of their drawing-room manners; reduce the pretty imitative activities of contemporary painting and design to the puerilities and decadent futilities that they basically are. Reduce everything to a welter of meaninglessness, perversion and disorder. Scourge the world, destroy the mind, laugh, laugh. . . .

When art is ruthlessly reduced to such simple drawings as children or madmen might make, one may perchance run into a new naïveté and directness of expression; when literature is reduced to a jumble of sounds and random blurts, some Dadaist may turn up out of the ruins with the suggestion of an entirely new direction of poetry, unhampered by the old laws and conventions. Sometimes one even suspects the most avowed Dadaist of consciously creating beauty. Thus is the corner turned from destruction to creation, from the ridiculous to something æsthetically moving.

Whether Dadaism was conceived as a huge joke or as a cultural reign of terror, and whatever its faults, one must recognize that occasionally the Dadaists turn up an abstract composition that begets such a novel reaction, such a fresh emotion, that one forgets all the rest—and remembers wearily the sense of futility so often en-

WOODCUT,
BY KURT SCHWITTERS

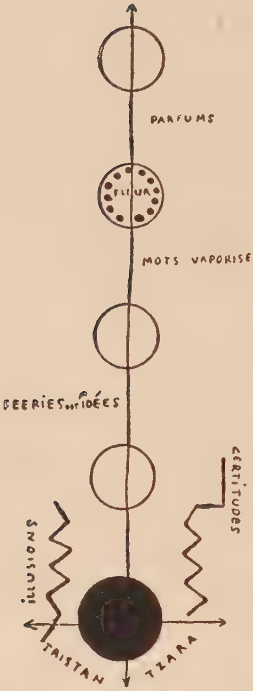
gendered by a pilgrimage through our official art museums, with their miles and miles of descriptive canvases, examples of brilliant technique, and pale reflections of the glories of long ago. Perhaps we should merely say that the *essential* Dada thing is mad, cynical, futile, irresponsible, hopelessly in love with the paradoxical and the bizarre; but that it has drawn into its fold a certain number of artists who are recognized as great on both sides of the fence, men who have gone over not so much because they admire the madness on the other side as because they are sick of the general stupidity in regard to the arts on this side. Then it becomes clear that the movement is trivial, inconsequential and wholly destructive. We will claim the few really constructive Dadaists as Cubists or Expressionists—and Dada becomes merely the negative phase, the obverse side of the great post-Impressionistic-Expressionistic development.

The usual Dadaist design is in the nature of a geometrical diagram-picture which escapes all contact with emotional or æsthetic experience. I have reproduced Picabia's portrait of Tzara, as typical of Dada representative art. Most of Picabia's drawings of his Dada period look like working-plans such as plumbers or furniture-makers might use, with the names of the parts carefully lettered on. They have an intellectual interest for the puzzle-minded, and it is possible—yes, just possible—that they have an æsthetic purpose I have not fathomed.

A chief Dada occupation for a time was the making of pictures with all sorts of extraneous objects and substances stuck on: buttons, bits of tin, calico, subway tickets—even spools, wheels, etc., etc. Their aim presumably was to achieve abstract design and to show that they could do it with any old means. The Cubists had done this sort of thing with what appears in Dada company to be restraint. And when an artist like Picasso attempted it, he usually made a composition which, if one disregarded the means, had true æsthetic form and appeal. But the idea seems trivial; simply a desire to show the painter's virtuosity, to prove that he could make tasteful arrangements even out of despised materials, a picture out of junk.

To indicate the "infantile" phase of Dadaism at its best—and there is true emotional expression here—I have added two drawings by Georg Grosz. (Pages 137-8.) Few critics would deny to Grosz the virtues of sensitiveness and directness.

There was a brief flurry a couple of years back about Tatlinism.



PORTRAIT OF TRISTAN TZARA,
BY FRANCIS PICABIA

This was a movement instigated by an artist named Vladimir Tatlin, and was strongest in Russia, although it developed adherents in Germany and France. It probably grew out of decadent Cubism of the pasted-on-button sort. At any rate it disavowed picture-making as such; declared for "constructivism" (and was really a part of that constructivist movement of which more will be said in the chapters on sculpture); and blossomed out with a logic of "contra-reliefs," and a claim of being the true modern art because it got its inspiration from the machine-age. It did, indeed, use machine materials—steel, glass, armour-plate, wood, cog-wheels, wire, etc.

THE YOUNG COOK, BY SOUTINE

—for its constructions, and it seemed to its practitioners to embody the reality of today because the forms of the steel bridge, the power-house, the radio, etc., were built into its works. The complete constructions ran to geometric figures, of which the spiral was commonest—so much so that Tatlinism is sometimes taken to mean art works designed in spiral form, whether in sculpture, architecture, costume or what not.

Since 1925 the noisiest group of insurgents in Paris has carried on its campaigns under the banner of "Sur-Realism." It is somewhat difficult to get at the "principles" of the school. One member put it baldly that the group was out to assassinate painting. Adherents less Dadaistic claim that a good Sur-Realist is an artist who makes himself superior to all forms of reality. "Disembarrassed of the trammels of the real, we enter into the domain of the Absolute." This would seem to bring the group into line with the several schools of abstractionists. But in general the Sur-Realists have turned symbolistic and psychic-revelatory. They paint what they find in dreams and subjective ramblings and exotic desires. A Sur-Realist poet wrote,

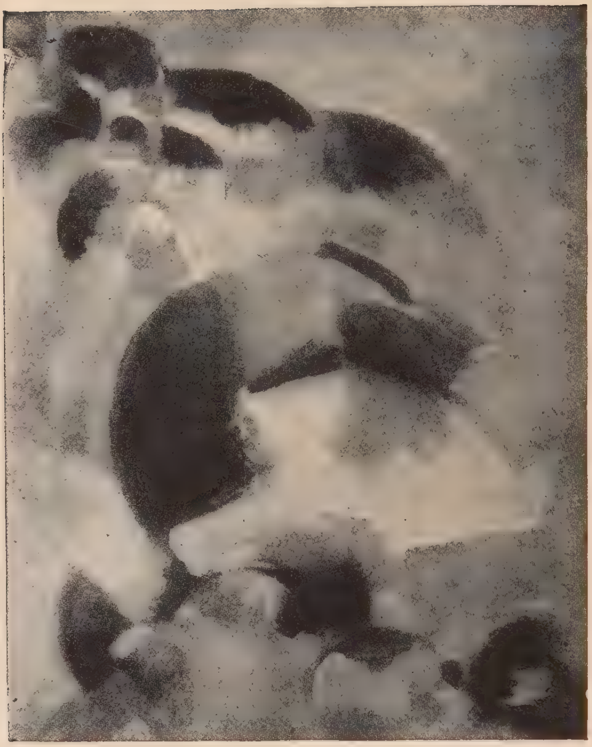
> "So long have I dreamed of thee,
> Thou hast lost reality."

And there is something of the background clarity, the distinct remoteness of dreams in the work of their most characteristic painters. They have been accused at times of fixing on their canvases subjects out of their suppressed desires—in general, ones better kept suppressed. Certainly there is a Freudian angle in their approach to art.

As this implies a revolution only in the method of finding subject matter, the movement may be put down as a minor one, affecting very little the main trend of modern painting. The one artist closely identified with Sur-Realism who has measurably risen above the limitations of the cult is Giorgio di Chirico, an able and original painter. The group sometimes claims Picasso, Braque and Klee, but they were established leaders before the Sur-Realist name was invented. It is clear, too, that Dadaism was a source, and Picabia, Arp and Man Ray simply crossed over into the newly named camp. More typically Sur-Realistic and dream-like are Joan Miro, Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, and Georges Malkine.

"Synchromism" takes us back to the line of development in painting which we followed from Impressionism through Cezanne, Cubism and Futurism. It is likely to have surer place in future art histories than Vorticism, Dadaism or Sur-Realism. The word Synchromism means simply "with color." The basic idea advanced by the Synchromists is that every color has a physical property which makes it, in effect, approach or recede from the eye—-yellow, for instance, comes forward, while blue tends to run off into space; that there is a definite color scale governing the movement of form in paintings; and that to paint a receding form yellow or red just because the objective thing in nature is yellow or red is a violation of a structural truth; and further, that the true and "pure" painting of the future will be form composition, without drawing, in accordance with this newly discovered color law.

The history of color in painting began merely in color added to drawing for (apparently) realistic value—–a green tree green, etc.; then it was added for sensuous effect, for ornamental value; then it became a source of increased dramatic effect, with the story-painters and the realists; finally the Impressionists analyzed natural colors and transferred them scientifically (but in all their accidentals) to the canvas. Cezanne was the first to use color creatively as a means to form-expression; and the Synchromists believed that they were carrying his work to its final goal, absolute purification of painting, by banishing from their works everything that opposed the physical qualities of color.



COSMIC SYNCHROMY,
BY MORGAN RUSSELL

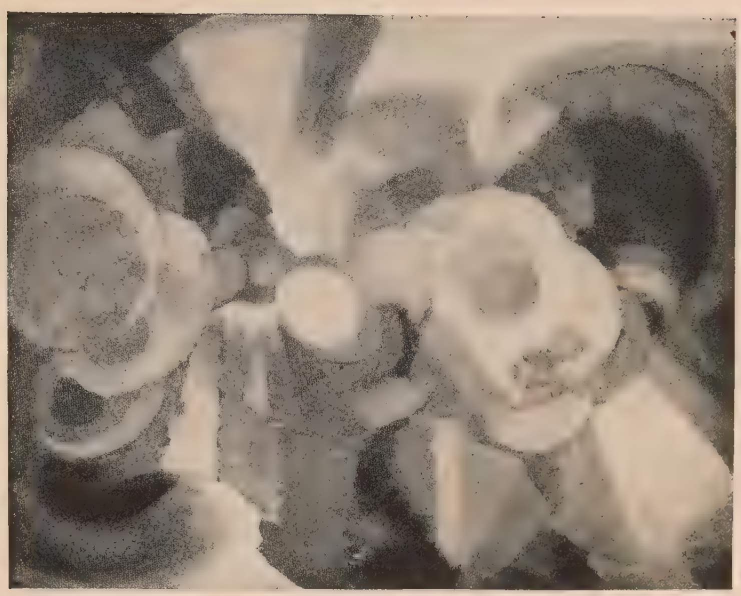
Willard Huntington Wright, who wrote a standard book on modern art, *Modern Painting: Its Tendency and Meaning*—to which I am much indebted—felt so sure that this was a final consummation that he led up to "Synchromism" as the crucial chapter of his book. He finds in the "abstract coalition of color, form and composition" the final phase of the cycle that painting had traveled through all the important modernists from Delacroix and Turner to Cezanne and the Cubists. He saw, in the Synchromists' color orchestration of all tones from black to white, the means of the painter resolved to a medium without hazard. An exhibition in Paris of the works of S. Macdonald-Wright and Morgan Russell, two Americans of European training, and the leading exponents of Synchromism, led Willard Huntington Wright to say:

> There were human figures distorted almost out of recognition for the compositional needs of the canvas and painted in bars of pure color; still-lifes which seemed to be afire with chromatic brilliance; fantastic fruits; life-sized male figures in pure yellow-orange; and mountains of intense reds and purples, warm greens and violets. All the pictures, however, displayed decided organizational ability, and they possessed a more complete harmony of color and line than had been achieved by any of the other younger painters. . . .
>
> They desired to express, by means of color, form which would be as complete and as simple as a Michelangelo drawing, and which would give subjectively the same emotion of form that the Renaissance master gives objectively. They wished to create images of such logical structure that the imagination would experience their unrecognizable reality in the same way our eyes experience the recognizable realities of life. They strove to bring about a new and hitherto unperceived reality which would be as definite and moving as the commonplace realities of every day, in short, to find an abstract statement for life itself by the use of forms which had no definable aspects. The Synchromists' chief technical method of obtaining this abstract equivalent for materiality was to make use of the inherent and absolute movement of colors toward and away from the spectator, by placing colors on forms in exact accord with the propensities of those colors to approach or recede from the eye. . . .
>
> With their knowledge of the fundamentals of rhythmic organization, which is well in advance of that of the other painters of today, their progress seems assured. Their postulates are too definite to permit of the introduction of literary or musical transcendentalism; and their *apports* are too significant to permit of any retrogression toward metaphysics or

drama. Their palette has become co-ordinated and rationalized. Their composition is founded on the human body in movement. And their color, in its plastic sense, takes into consideration space, light and form. These factors represent their technical assets. With these painters comes into being an art divorced from all the entanglements of photography, of piecemeal creation, of inharmonic gropings, of literature and of data hunting.

A year or two later, when these artists had actually turned (for a time) to abstract composition, Morgan Russell wrote as follows about the picture here reproduced: "My first synchromies represented a personal manner of visualizing by color rhythms; hence my treatment of light by multiple rainbow-like color-waves which, expanding into larger undulations, form the general composition. In my next step I was concerned with the elimination of the natural object and with the retention of color rhythms. An example of this period is the *Cosmic Synchromy*. The principal idea in this canvas is a spiralic plunge into space, excited and quickened by appropriate color contrasts. . . . While there will probably always be illustrative pictures, it cannot be denied that this century may see the flowering of a new art of forms and colors alone. Personally, I believe that non-illustrative painting is the purest manner of æsthetic expression, and that, provided the basic demands of great composition are adhered to, the emotional effect will be even more intense than if there was present the obstacle of representation. Color is form; and in my attainment of abstract form I use those colors which optically correspond to the spatial extension of the forms desired."

I am reproducing also—although the reader is warned how incomplete Synchromist pictures are without color—Macdonald-



ORGANIZATION 5, BY S. MACDONALD-WRIGHT

Wright's *Organization 5.* The painter writes: "I strive to make my art bear the same relation to painting that polyphony bears to music. Illustrative music is a thing of the past; it has become abstract and purely æsthetic, dependent for its effect upon rhythm and form. Painting, certainly need not lag behind music."

Both Macdonald-Wright and Russell have recently reverted to some sort of vague and incidental representation of natural forms. That gives weight, perhaps, to my own opinion that any formula in art creation, even when it embraces so important a step forward in scientific knowledge of materials, is likely to prove deadening to its practitioners if they follow it academically, intellectually, absolutely. (The same criticism applies to Jay Hambridge's widely discussed discovery of a formula of "dynamic symmetry.")

The name Synchromy—"with color"—leaves out as much as it embraces. It may mark a further scientific step toward one phase of the thing Cezanne was groping for instinctively. But it leaves more than mere improvisation to be accomplished. If this is to remain painting, it must have a foundation in composition, in organization. What of *structure* that we talked so much about a while back? That is obviously where the very inventive Synchromists lacked. Perhaps it is lack of the structure—perhaps Vortex!—of natural forms (which has little to do with outward aspects) which nullifies so much of the effort toward abstract painting. Let us give the Synchromists their due, and say that they put important knowledge into the hands of all painters; but let us plunge ahead into the muddy waters of abstraction itself.*

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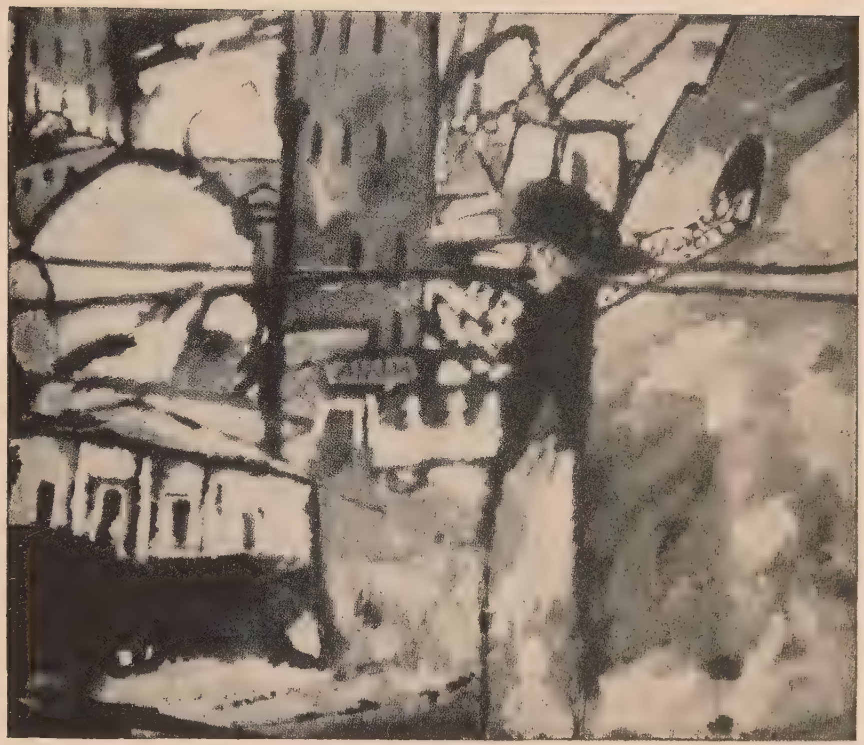
* In 1931 Morgan Russell wrote, in connection with an exhibition of his paintings in San Francisco: "During 1915 I came to realize that my Synchromies were a separate branch of the painter's art, in fact, I believe them to be a new branch. Since that time I have worked both at them and at traditional painting.... Synchromies, like architecture, constitute a realm of the pure beauty of intellectually conceived volumes and color." Thus the initiator of one of the most fecund experiments in modern painting reminds us of a point every reader should keep continuously in mind: the many-sidedness of modern art. To attempt to find a single formula to explain all that is being creatively expressed today is to limit both one's enjoyment and one's understanding. We are all concerned not with a finished achievement, but with a living, growing phenomenon.

IX

THE SWING TOWARD ABSTRACTION



IMPRESSION—MOSCOW, BY KANDINSKY

THIS painting obviously is not true to nature. It distorts and mixes up whatever objects in Moscow inspired it. The photographic function of painting has here been minimized, and whatever is of value in the picture is of some different æsthetic order. The artist has, in truth, been travelling toward abstraction.

Abstraction in art may best be defined negatively, as the lack of representative form. It involves absolute composition (as in music)—composition which neither imitates nor suggests objective forms. Abstract painting or sculpture never provides a transcription. It is the negation of the concrete, the material, the outwardly real.

We have already seen how the Synchromists moved toward the abstract in the limited field of isolated color. Building on the fusion of color and drawing in Cezanne, and the scientific truths of the Neo-Impressionists, they took what they considered the final step toward the purification of painting. But having arrived at a complete knowledge of the physical properties of color—a mode of orchestration, qualities of projection and recession, etc.—and thus being theoretically able to create in a free and absolute way, they found something lacking, a structural element missing, and they turned back to at least a speaking acquaintanceship with nature.

Through the hundred years (from Turner, Constable and Delacroix to the Synchromists) when color was progressing toward this purification, a similar progression was to be noted in another element. Compositional form was moving gradually but surely toward abstraction. For convenience I am doing violence to my own terminology here, and including in "compositional form" all the factors entering into the organization of a painting aside from color: subject matter, line, composition in the rhythm and balance sense, chiaroscuro (light and shade composition). I have noted at intervals in the last four chapters how changes in this compositional form tended progressively toward distortion, suppression and finally elimination of the representative element.

Drawing had been held to an imitative function, to transcription, almost throughout the centuries-long realistic era. The objective forms of nature were arranged according to a few elementary rules of composition and by an instinctive feeling for organization on the part of the artist. Giotto, Tintoretto, Rembrandt, El Greco may have widened the conception of compositional form, or struck beyond its generally understood functions, but the naturalistic or imitative limitation still held generally down to the 19th Century. With Cezanne the representative element was first decisively modified; distortion entered. With the Cubists, who are even more clearly concerned in this progression because they renounced color, we reach the stage of almost complete elimination of representative forms. The next step is abstraction.

It is almost impossible to state any theory of the abstract in art without recourse to the terminology and the parallel of music. For music is a wholly non-representative art based in its physical aspect on certain widely understood phenomena. The goal of the abstract painters is an art of color as free from associative and objective interest as is this other art of sound. There is no more reason, argue the abstractionists, why painting should be dependent upon the depiction or suggestion of natural objects than there is for music to be dependent upon likeness to natural sounds. Painting must be stripped of the trivial and extraneous elements that give rise to the pleasures typical of drama, anecdote, photography, etc.

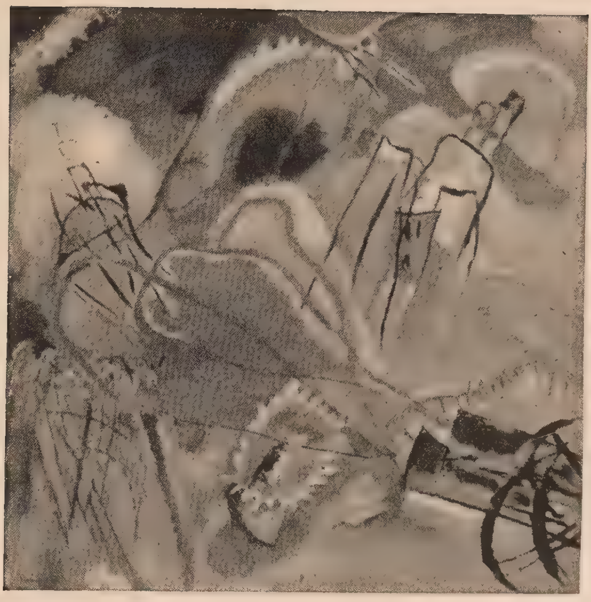
Many artists have felt this truth, and the timid experiments have been myriad. But the story of abstraction in modern painting is popularly and legitimately centered in the life-work of one man: Vasily Kandinsky. He is today the world's foremost practitioner of a visual art wholly divorced from material actuality, and the most lucid theorist of the movement. His theory, to be sure, is shaped by an extraneous religious outlook on life, for he is a theosophist. It is limited to a spiritual vision which seems to some of us to ignore certain physical facts of art creation. But he is the greatest figure of the pioneer swing toward abstraction.

Kandinsky was born in Moscow, and was Russian-trained. Later he went to Munich to study, and has ever since been associated with the modernist movement in German art. From his early German days we hear echoes of his obsession with composition, with color orchestration, with memory-painting, although his work up to 1908 was marked by nothing more radical than a posteresque simplification. In 1911 he and Franz Marc, with two or three others, formed the famous "Blaue Reiter" group. His art reached maturity at about that time, and he has been a world influence ever since.

In 1910 there was published Kandinsky's book *On the Spiritual Element in Art* (published in an English translation in 1914 as "The Art of Spiritual Harmony"). His theory of painting had already set definitely toward abstract means, although he hesitated to commit himself wholly.

Kandinsky argues the case for his sort of abstraction as follows: Painting has become materialistic, and the great mass of contemporary painters are merely opportunists. Art should, however, be nothing more than an expression of the spirituality in man. Cezanne showed the beginning of a new way. Matisse followed it but got lost in the seductiveness of color, the French love for color-decoration; Picasso was important too, but he got lost in a scholar's search for form. Kandinsky feels that color and form are physical means and only incidental—the expression of the artist's inner life is the thing.

Not only color and form, but the third, combining element, com-



IMPROVISATION, BY KANDINSKY

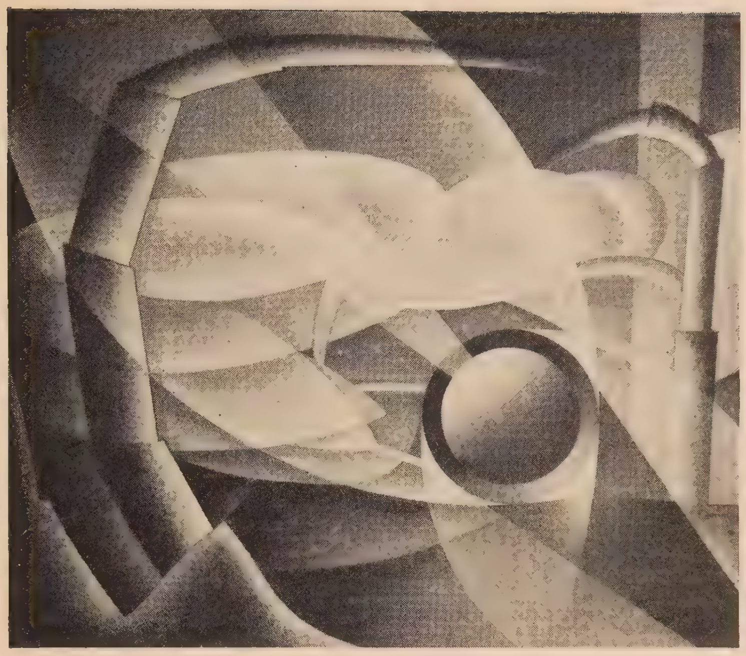
position, "must be decided only by a corresponding vibration in the human soul." There is so much stressing of this "vibration in the human soul" in the book, that one marks that as Kandinsky's major source of creation. It determines certain "combinations of veiled and fully expressed appeals," which presumably are improvised from a multiplicity of colors and forms:

"The adaptability of forms, their organic but inward variations, their motion in the picture, their inclination to material or abstract, their mutual relations, either individually or as parts of a whole; further, the concord or discord of the various elements of a picture, the handling of groups, the combinations of veiled and openly expressed appeals, the use of rhythmical or unrhythmical, of geometrical or non-geometrical forms, their contiguity or separation—all these things are material for counterpoint in painting. . . .

"Painting is an art, and art is not vague production, transitory and isolated, but a power which must be directed to the improvement and refinement of the human soul—to, in fact, the raising of the spiritual triangle. . . . *That is beautiful which is produced by the inner need, which springs from the soul.*"

The implication is clear: art must be cleansed of what is material. There is no talk of an absolute æsthetic quality which is the essential thing sought by the artist. Kandinsky does not renounce imitativeness for that search. When he mentions an element of "pure artistry" (beyond personality and style), it is only to repeat that that too must arise out of "the inner need." Always it is the inner need that is the source of all good art. Out of it one must develop his melodic and symphonic compositions as carefully as one must order his deeds, thoughts and feelings in life—to do otherwise would be to make bad "karma." We are painfully close to the preacher and the schoolmaster here.

Such an approach to art, sincere and purified though it is, leads to the substitution of a certain amount of mystery, mysticism and mood for those hard, simple, definite qualities which most significant modern artists have sought. Thus we find that Kandinsky works largely with what may be called the "mood values" of color. "Blue is the typical Heavenly color." It stands for rest; blue-black for grief, and violet for the echo of grief. White is a pregnant silence, black a dead silence. "Green is the Bourgeoisie—self-satisfied, immovable, narrow." And so on. This is a reversion to symbolism—interesting enough in itself, but not on the high-road



TIME CYCLE: NIGHT, BY RAYMOND JONSON

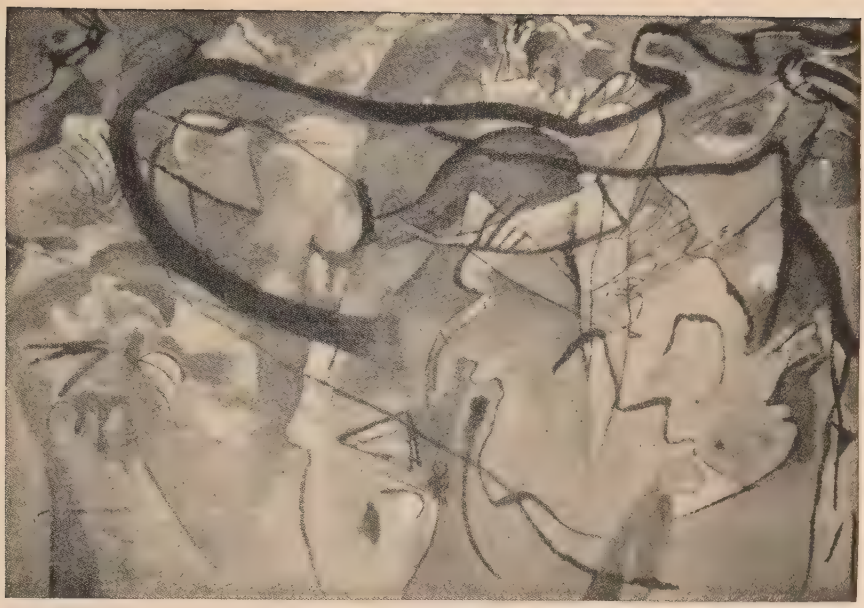
to creation. The artist finds, of course, a musical equivalent for each of these color values.

In his paintings there is a softness that belongs essentially to mood composition. His early pictures had titles. By 1910 he had adopted a system of dividing his canvases into three groups: Impressions, Improvisations and Compositions. He has not adhered strictly and exclusively to this classification, but it has served to label the greater bulk of his paintings. The picture at the head of the chapter is an "Impression." The representative element is fairly definite still, although it is obvious that the artist is more interested in form-composition. The next reproduction is an "Improvisation." Representation has almost disappeared. The picture opposite is a "Composition." Representation has been completely renounced.

Kandinsky has written of his three methods of work: "They represent three different sources of inspiration: (1) A direct impression of outward nature, expressed in purely artistic form. This I call an 'Impression.' (2) A largely unconscious spontaneous expression of inner character, the non-material nature. This I call an 'Improvisation.' (3) An expression of a slowly formed inner feeling, which comes to utterance only after long maturing. This I call a 'Composition.' In this, reason, consciousness, purpose, play an overwhelming part. But of the calculation nothing appears, only the feeling."

Two questions arise immediately when one studies the three sorts of picture together. Does the artist ever escape objective or associative interest entirely, either in his own mind or in the mind of the spectator? And are his most satisfying works those farthest removed from representation? Before attempting to answer, it is only just to say that everything Kandinsky does is likely to be pleasing in color in the decorative surface way. He minimizes in his writings the value of this sensuous effect—but it is the first thing that charms and holds the spectator who otherwise would be repelled by the lack of imitative or literary values in his pictures.

The *Impression* shown is clearly representative in origin. The *Improvisation No. 30,* like many another in this group, exhibits somewhere imitative values. This is so true that Kandinsky himself has called it informally "the cannon picture." He wrote to the owner, the late Arthur Jerome Eddy: "The designation 'Cannons'



COMPOSITION, BY KANDINSKY

selected by me *for my own use,* is not to be conceived as indicating the 'contents' of the picture. These contents are indeed what the spectator *lives* or *feels* while under the effect of the *form and color combinations* of the picture. This picture is nearly in the shape of a cross. . . . The presence of the cannons in the picture could probably be explained by the constant war talk that had been going on throughout the year. . . ." Later he writes, "The observer must learn to look at a picture as a graphic representation of a *mood* and not as a representation of *objects.*"

Here there is clearly representative means. The painter has not evaded them, but he tries to explain them away as sub-conscious on his part, and as something which the spectator should overlook.

PAINTING BY GEORG MUCHE

But the third picture, the *Composition No. 5,* has in it no object that we can name. One might make a game of finding approximate representative forms there, but the eye that is not overtrained to seek imitation first will not be seduced so shallowly. The question then is, do these purely abstract pictures give rise to deeper æsthetic pleasure than the partly representative pictures?

Judging only from Kandinsky's own work, I should say that they do not. In general there is a wandering, soft, unstructural quality about them which seems to me to be a denial of something important to painting. They may be pure transcriptions of spiritual meanderings, and perhaps we shall find that such things speak to us as we grow more spiritual. But at present I feel that this does not appeal to me (outside its color charm) as anything else than a vague transcription of human mood, to which I must be personally attuned at the moment of seeing the painting. If I happen to be in a veiled Maeterlinckian mood, I am charmed; on other days I have no more than a passing interest.

Perhaps this is art for the esoteric mind, for the dabbler into metaphysics. But that is putting art on the plane of an intellectual exercise. It admits of no such thing as a real æsthetic emotion. Until the psycho-analysts and the spiritualists dig deeper, we must discount the mystical element.

What is it, then, that the abstract painter probably needs out of nature—at least until his creative powers are more developed than at present? It is in some sense *structure.* His present compositions are at best spineless, at worst chaotic. They lack "form" in the structural and voluminous sense. Perhaps this element is recognizable emotionally only when associated with naturally or humanly built forms. The sense of weight, poise, organization, must perhaps have a vaguely associative origin in something mathematical or stable or palpable. Form thus becomes significant when it speaks of a quality of force or direction or movement.

The element in music which is lacking here is *movement in time.* Profound musical structure lies in the melodic and contrapuntal rather than the harmonic elements. Kandinsky's paintings may be perfect in harmony, but he has little claim to use the words "melodic" and "symphonic" in reference to his work. His painting is comparable rather to a chord in music.

Movement added to what Kandinsky has would lead us into the field of mobile color. Everything that he claims is possible there, as Thomas Wilfred has shown us; but that is not the art of painting.

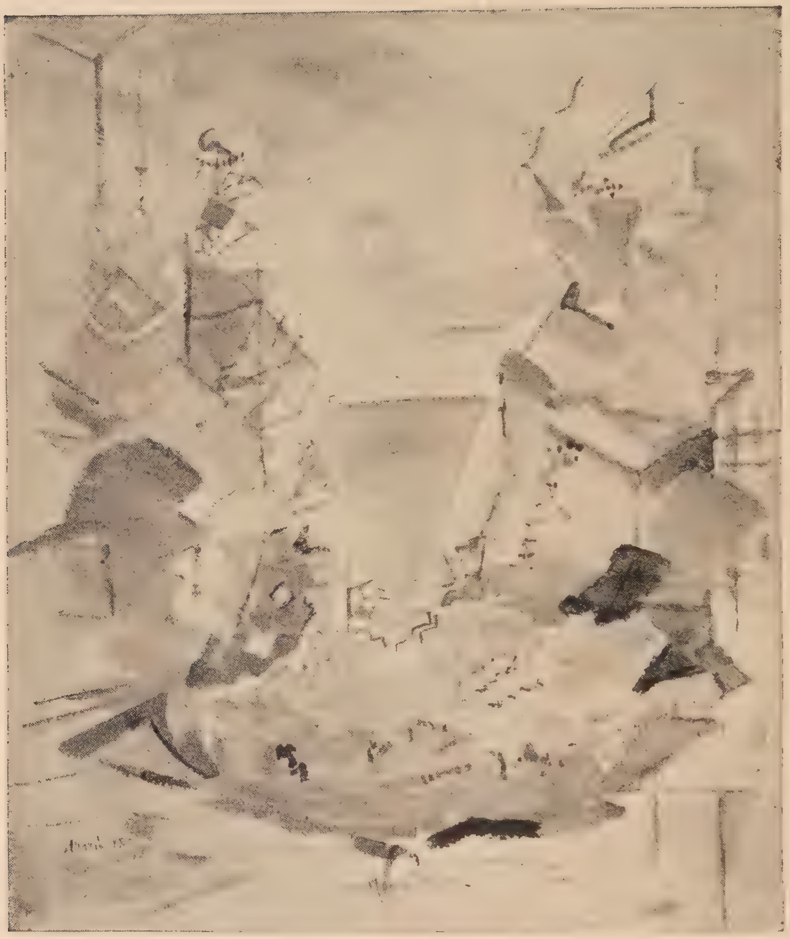
Lacking sequential movement, it is probable that painting must get back to structure in the Cezanne sense, or to poised movement, as it lives in his canvases. Harmonization in color is not enough. So far no one has shown us that improvisation in color and spirit-form suffices.

It is probable that Kandinsky realizes the structural lack in his painting. His work since 1920 exhibits more of lines and planes placed from edge to edge of the canvas. There is more of concentricity, angularity and suggested interpenetration, and not a little suggestion of Cubistic flatness. But it has only been a movement toward the less profound Cubist ideals. If there has been any significant shifting, it has been away from mere prettiness and daintiness; it has approached decorative flatness but has made no gain toward structural voluminous form—toward a deeper expressiveness.

Kandinsky's follower, Rudolf Bauer, who also works "musically," seems to me to produce pictures curiously like what I imagine my insides (physical, not spiritual) to be. They (the pictures) would serve well as decorations for a doctor's office. Nell Walden's abstract designs approach pattern-making. I think our silk manufacturers have stolen freely from her, much to their enrichment. But hers are not paintings in the beyond-decoration sense. Georg Muche adds something of Redon's delicate gradations to the surface of his canvas, and he seems to hint at deeper qualities. But he hints through cryptic-suggestive forms that might be swimming spheres or cyclones or harlequin suits. Likewise in America the abstract arrangements of "rhythm and form" of Andrew Dasburg, and many of the synchromatic organizations of Morgan Russell and Macdonald-Wright seem to contain veiled allusions to other worlds. They all lack structural substance. Almost any painting of any one of these artists would be an excellent starting point for one of Wilfred's compositions in mobile color; but he would substitute movement—development—for the element they lack within their static frames.

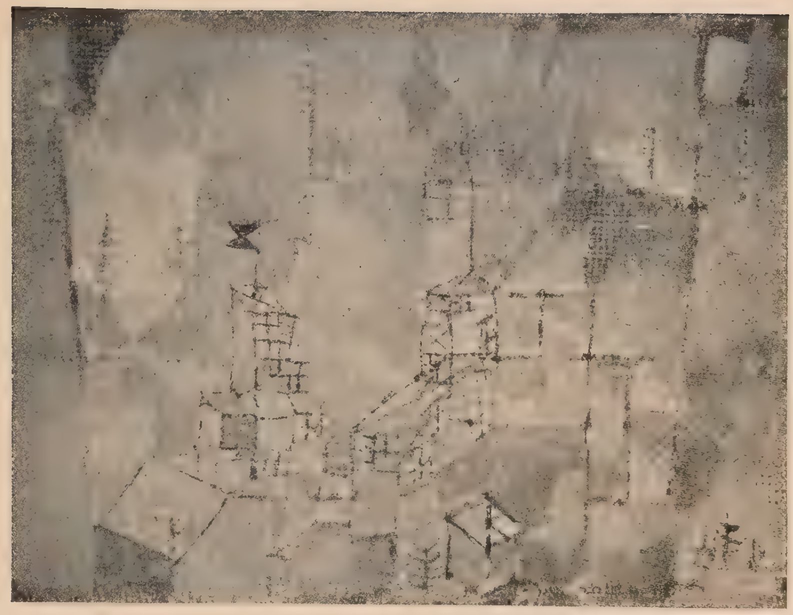
MOVEMENT,
BY MARSDEN HARTLEY

Perhaps it is merely that the giant of abstract creation has not yet arrived. Perhaps someone will bring architectonics into it. At present the lover of modernist art is in the paradoxical position where he likes the painter who strictly subordinates imitation to a hidden non-representational element, but finds unsatisfying the painter who goes over to non-representation entirely, attempting to



ROCKS AND SEA, MAINE, BY JOHN MARIN

create in abstract form. Certainly most of us appreciate Kandinsky's *Impressions* and *Improvisations*, and such things as his *Winter* (page 109), more than we do the *Compositions.* And yet—I confess that I have moments of wobbling on the question. I find



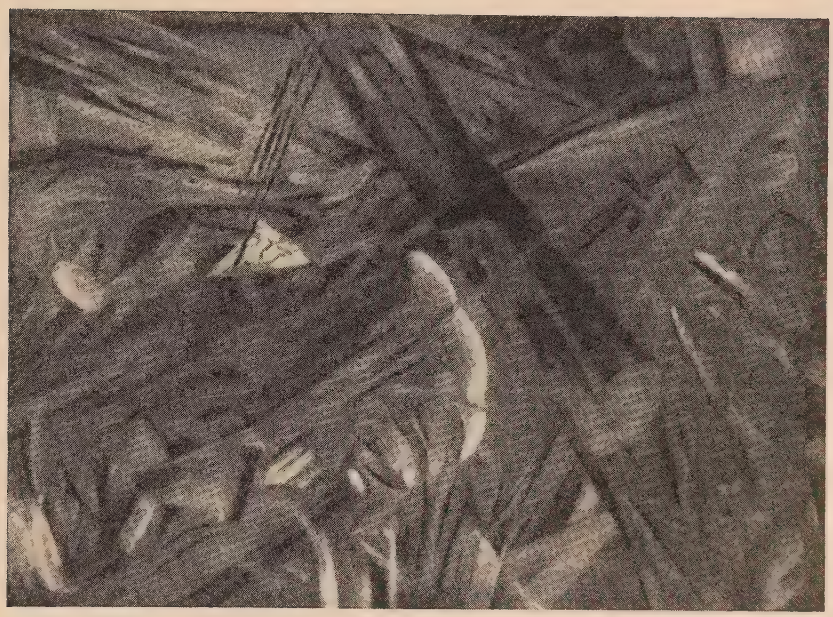
WATERCOLOR—OPUS 120, 1918, BY PAUL KLEE

something very moving in the abstract work of certain Americans—particularly Georgia O'Keeffe, Helen Torr, Raymond Jonson, Andrew Dasburg and Augustus Vincent Tack.

There is a place where abstract painting borders on abstract decoration. Purely sensuous values are more easily obtained than structural ones from non-representative material. From Claude Bragdon's higher-mathematical architectural ornament to the Matisse sort of painted decorative panel, there is a wide range of achievement in modern art that is hardly equalled outside of Persian or other Oriental history. Perhaps the sensuous impression afforded by an absolute decoration is a sort of first dimension of the deeper ecstasy that is afforded by a picture indubitably rich in voluminous form. At any rate I am one who would give place to the "decorative movement" in the histories of modern art, if only because the decorative ideal is a step closer to what we are after than was anything revered in the long realistic era. I add a decorative painting by Marsden Hartley to supply material for your further thought about this—remembering too that Hartley has a clearer understanding of the extra-dimensional quality in painting than almost any other American—excepting Marin and Kuhn. (I might add several more names, in 1931—but refrain.)

Marin has given me more pure æsthetic enjoyment than anything I have ever seen of Kandinsky's. He stops just short of abstraction. Very few painters dare go so far toward it. Cezanne did in his watercolors. In them he seems to bare his painter's soul more easily than he did in oils. Look back to page 99, and to Marin's painting on page 35. These things register the high-water mark reached in sheer creation by the modernist painters. There is in them more of the essential artist himself and more of the essence of painting. It is intensified expression in the subjective sense and in truth to medium. And it borders on abstraction.

I have put opposite each other here the *Rocks and Sea* by Marin and one of Paul Klee's whatnots (*Opus 120, 1918*). Marin wrote once, in connection with this painting: "These works are meant as constructed expressions of the inner senses, responding to things seen and felt. . . . In all things there exists the central power, the big force, the big movement; and to this central power all the smaller factors have relation." Out of that attitude grows a painting like this. It seems to me a safer approach to abstraction than Kandinsky's spirit-guidance. Then, as if to prove to us how little



TIERSCHICKSALE, BY FRANZ MARC

subject has to do with the problem, Klee follows with his children's block picture and lands at almost the same place æsthetically—though less intensely.

Klee and Franz Marc gained much from close intimacy with Kandinsky, and assimilated his ideas. But both were strong enough to remain individual, and both retained a modicum of the representative element—although Marc had come very close to abstraction just before his death. Klee can put the slightest thing on his canvas or paper and it comes out a palpitating picture—although the imitative and subject interest may seem to be a child's naïve scratching. Marc puts his beloved animals into his consciousness, filters them through some abstract conception and they turn out an emotional expression—but with at least a remaining reminiscence of the originals. That is about as far as the creative use of abstraction has really gone. And yet the ideal of abstraction somehow seems to underlie the whole modern art movement.

FALLS OF ENCHANTMENT,
BY GUEST WICKSON

X

THE ART OF MOBILE COLOR

ONE cannot properly speak of a modernist movement in the art of mobile color. The whole art as we have it is practically a development of the last decade: all there is of it is modern. But since my interpretation of typical modernism is built largely on the hypothesis that there is an epochal shift from obsession with representation to the search for expressive qualities, there is a special appropriateness in the inclusion of a chapter about this new and purely abstract art of light. It answers, moreover, the ultimate question which must be asked by those modernist painters who are tempted to abandon the anchor in objectivity and "compose absolutely." Every one of them has found that when he gave up the materials for *structure* and *organization* in his canvases, there was need for some other element beyond color harmonies and structureless color-form. The answer is that he then needs movement—movement in time. And when he has gained that, his art has ceased to be painting, has become mobile color.

Doubtless for centuries people have dreamed of an art of colors not only combined harmoniously but flowing in melodious succession. Many have guessed the possibilities of an art of broken-up light no less fruitful of beauty than music, no less abstract, no less productive of ecstasy. But there was no means of liberating this potential art of flowing color-form until electricity was fairly conquered. (Certain sentimental art-lovers will wince at the idea of anything so modern as an electric machine acting as instrument

—the long-ago-and-far-away romanticists and classicists—but for reassurance one need only remember that the "purest" of the arts, music, is the most mathematical.)

There were already experiments making certain the ultimate fulfillment of the vision, before Thomas Wilfred built his color organ, which he calls the Clavilux, here in America a few years back. But Wilfred has for the first time constructed a machine so capable and so flexible that one is able to forget completely that there is any mechanical element involved; is able to sit in an "auditorium" and see this new art of visions and dreams come true. For already one accepts a composition in mobile color as freely as music, with the mind quiescent, the emotions responsive, the world well forgotten.

No one supposes, I think, that Thomas Wilfred has all at once and at the first leap become a master of composition in this new art. Color composers of the future are likely to look back and feel somewhat contemptuous of the simple things he is playing for us today. They perhaps will be seen to correspond to the simple folk tunes of primitive peoples. Orchestral works will be a later development; the elements of contrapuntal composition are as yet but vaguely conceived. But the point is that already one experiences moments of such poignant beauty, and sustained periods of such intense emotional responsiveness, that one does not question, speculate or prophesy. This simply is the thing itself—disarming the mind, speaking to the spirit.

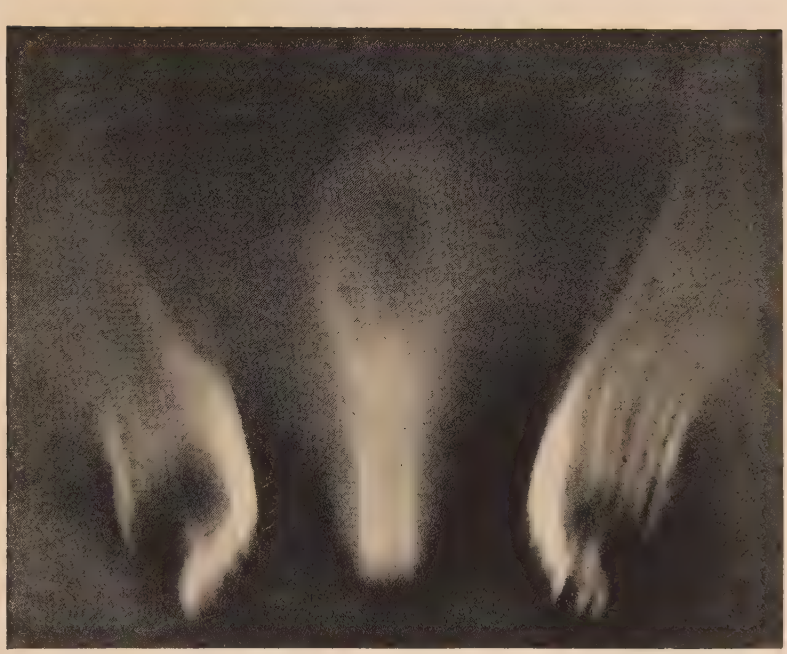
Let me tell as nearly as possible what I saw when I went to Wilfred's "trial theatre" at Huntington, Long Island. (I have heard that when an adapted Clavilux came to a New York theatre, the result was not at all the same, the conditions of the "throw" not being right.) Imagine, please, a small company of us seated at the back of a dimly-lighted theatre. We seemed to be looking out toward a wall of darkness, an effect that was further intensified when the last bit of overhead light gradually faded out. In front something moved away, so that one became conscious not of a dark wall but of a dark space—as if one were looking into a blackened camera-box of enormous dimensions.

The actual beginnings of the "composition" came when shreds of color floated in—at what distance, a few feet or miles away, one could not guess—taking form, shifting, unfolding, building up into mighty movements, dropping away to faint playings-about, but always mixed *in space.* In that is the first great surprise for one who has more or less foreseen mobile color: in the fact that it appears not on a sheet or wall, but plastically, as space composition in color rather than painting in color, as an interpenetrating, space art rather than an imposed two-dimensional art. In the seeing, right there all previous expectations are surpassed, as if, for instance, one who had foreseen the art of music in a mere succession of beautiful sounds had come upon it instead in the greater fulness of harmonic compositions.

How long one of the color pieces takes in the playing, I do not know. But four of them seem to make up a complete enough concert program. Each of the four I saw was marked by a distinctive quality or theme, and within this there was complex variety of form, movement, hues and values, accompaniment, etc. One remembers certain themes as stately, slow-moving, turning in on themselves; others as bright, quick, tender—colors at play; still others, perhaps, as oversweet, sentimental, pretty. And yet through them all ran a dignity and a directness of appeal and a sense of unity that left no doubt that here was the beginning of one of the great arts of the world. One had that feeling of detachment, of ecstasy, which is a response only to the most solemn religious or æsthetic experience.

It is almost impossible to describe any one composition because no words have been invented to convey the ideas of color-form in movement. But in general a single color (hue) and its shape, thrown into the stage space at the start, establish the theme, and the first large movement is the beginning of a series that varies in contrast, balance, parallel and repetition. The beginning may show a bulb of color floating down into sight, constantly changing, seldom without a harmonious accompaniment of surrounding colors: it falls, turns, unfolds, folds again, fades away in two directions, gathers itself, glows into brilliancy, floats up almost into blackness, glows a moment and disappears; suddenly the faintest beginning of two similar bulbs come from nowhere, become brilliant, repeat the turnings, foldings, fadings, disappearance; then the original bulb returns, composed in other hues and repeats the movement; and so on to other variations within the same composition.

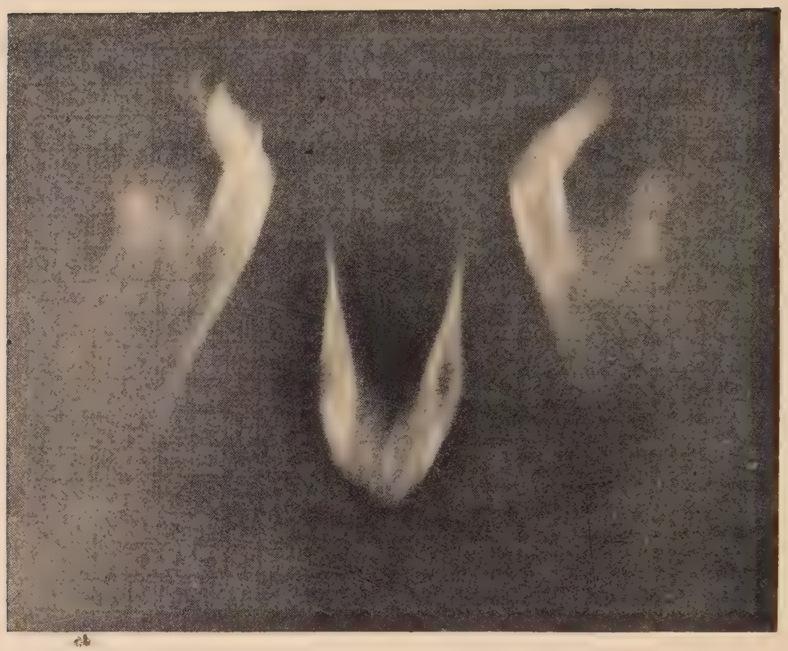
Sometimes the shapes are too elusive to be named. One becomes conscious of a sea of dull color, into which a solo color or groups of colors swim slowly and silently, change in hue and values, float lazily, form the most enchanting enveloping veils of light, fade, grow momentarily brilliant, disappear again on the surface of the sea. Often these shapeless movements seem on the verge of taking



FORMS PROJECTED IN MOBILE COLOR,
BY THOMAS WILFRED

tangible form, but always when they seem about to resolve into "figures" they float back into vague mistiness.

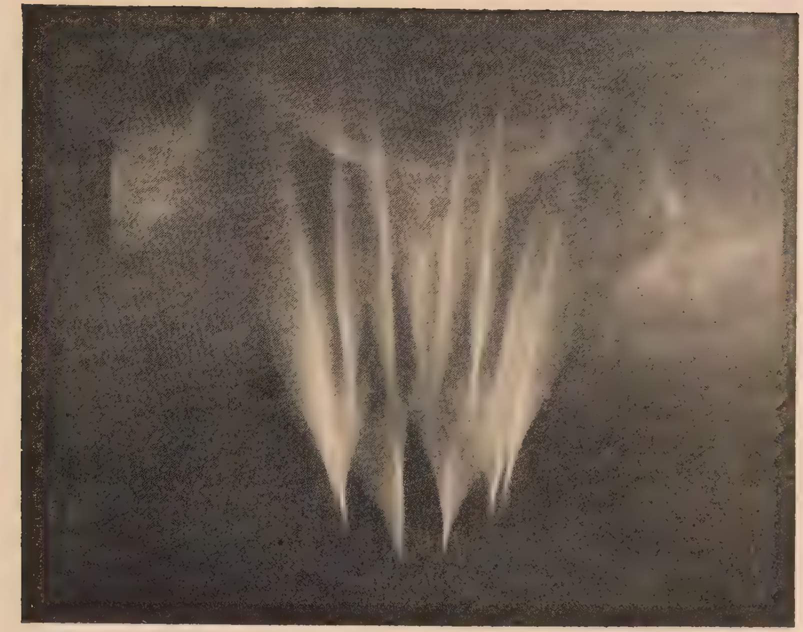
The purely atmospheric effects prove in general less stirring than what might be called the more structural pieces. A dominating form seems necessary to stir the emotions to the point where one just naturally throws off every restraint and memory, and revels in the pure joy of emotional reaction. This form may be something that looks geometrical, such as a triangular or conical tower of light, or an oval, or three circles intertwined; or it may be cloud-like, or like two huge screens constantly turning over and unfolding, or mere flashes or perhaps planets. Sometimes it is



FORMS PROJECTED IN MOBILE COLOR, BY THOMAS WILFRED

luminous, giving off light, and again it seems merely to reflect light—a distinction which may hold the clue to one of the problems of composition: how to keep a motive dominant and its accompaniment subdued. I retain the definite impression of solo colors or solo figures moving throughout in the midst of an accompaniment of harmonious colors, but never lost in that accompaniment.

As to the actual colors, their range surpasses anything that the lover of color could imagine just from seeing paintings and mosaics, studying color charts, or experimenting in the usual channels. Perhaps only those of us who have had to do with stage lighting, and have watched in rehearsals the accidental effects produced



FORMS PROJECTED IN MOBILE COLOR,
BY THOMAS WILFRED

through a particularly flexible switchboard and equipment, could have guessed a fraction of the miracle of which colored lights are capable. The inventor of the Clavilux has brought these effects and gradations under control in a way that makes the best stage switchboard seem crude and inexpressive by comparison. Whether he has a scientific color formula or not, I do not know, but in all the compositions he played I cannot remember the slightest suggestion of a color discord.

I remember especially certain pale greens, apparently lit up with warmer colors underneath; a specially beautiful deep blue (for which I have often searched in vain among pigments and fabrics);

grays that have lost their dullness; stains of red that shaded from the intensest of centers to borders of orange and violet; and a virgin white become glowingly alive and interesting by contrast. But it is in the constantly changing gradations and harmonies that the marvel really lies. The number of hues must literally run into millions—or infinity.

The complexity of considerations must be a challenge to any venturesome artist. There is, first, the matter of hues, or color-tints; and beyond that the matter of color's lightness or darkness, its values (a resource without counterpart in music, I believe); and beyond that again the matter of intensity. Then follows the question of form, the shape or figure of the light, which is capable of as many millions more of differences. And then harmony, the juxtaposition of harmonious hues, values, intensities; and paralleling and contrasting forms. And to make it all alive, infinitely multiplying the variations and harmonies, there is movement, adding color melody and orchestration. Is it any wonder that the keyboard of the Clavilux looks to the uninitiated like sixteen piano playboards banked up in a half-circle and all asking to be played at once?

It is too soon to attempt to build up a particularized theory for the art of mobile color; but this much may be said at the outset: it must be, like music, an abstract art. It will have a formal beauty of its own sort, distinctive, shaped by the limitations and possibilities of its medium, colored lights. But it will not ever (let us hope) get mixed up with the aim of representing nature. It would then—awful thought—become a sort of super-colored movie. As in music, where only the cheapest novelties of composition try definitely to imitate the sounds of nature, so in this new art there will be no effort to suggest objective reality.

The color organ, like the sound organ, plays compositions that are tender and plaintive, or stirring and stately, or light and playful; for it seems almost impossible to separate any æsthetic experience from such associations of "feeling," which are, after all, to some extent recognitional. I may even add further, in fairness to those who are partisan to representative art, that of those few people who had seen the mobile color recital, and to whom I put the question, every one admitted having discovered almost recognizable objects at various points—though each one said that he supposed that he "had read them into" the forms presented. At times some of the forms seemed to me about to take the shape of gigantic human or celestial figures. Again the accompaniment to a long movement seemed like blowing curtains, constantly pulling out and away from the center of light. And once I am sure that there floated up and out of the central pool of color and away to the wings two golden-brown loaves of Mother's Best Bread. These, however, were the let-down moments of the program.

The inventor of the color organ—I might better say, perhaps, the present inventor—is Thomas Wilfred, a young Danish-American artist who has been experimenting in the field of color for fourteen years. He has been poet, designer, theatre artist and musician. But that would hardly explain the marvels of his instrument. It happens that he counts among his assets also a genius for electrical and mechanical engineering. This new art can flower only out of an intricate electrical machine, and Wilfred has been inventive enough both to create the machine and to get beyond any suggestion of its mechanics in the exhibited result. This is his third instrument. While necessarily it cannot be fully explained at present—patents are pending, I suppose—this much may be said freely: The colors are projected as electric-light rays controlled through a keyboard somewhat similar to that of a church organ. One set of keys controls the color as such, another controls intensity, and a third controls movement. The forms are varied by means of "mediums," prisms or lenses through which the lights are projected. The effect of space instead of screen is achieved through the use of a background that is a modification of the theatrical stage-dome or cupola-horizon, in place of a sheet or flat wall.

I have used many musical terms and musical analogies. Thomas Wilfred is particularly insistent, however, that this new art be considered on its own merits and within the limits of its own media, and that music be left out of the question. His attitude is doubtless in part a reaction to the famous attempts of Scriabin to add a colored-light accompaniment to orchestral music, based on a supposed scientific correspondence of sound waves and light waves. Even should such an art of combined abstract sound and abstract color develop, it would be a bastard art like opera, where good music is constantly interrupted by bad (or rarely good) acting, staging, etc. Other color organs, like Rimington's, throwing colored lights on screens, have also been based on theories of musical notation.

Wilfred's approach seems the wiser one, for it forestalls a limitation of mobile color through a supposed rigid "scale." It leaves the field for invention absolutely open, subject only to the limits inherent in the nature of its medium. And yet there remains the illuminating fact that Wilfred himself is a professional musician.

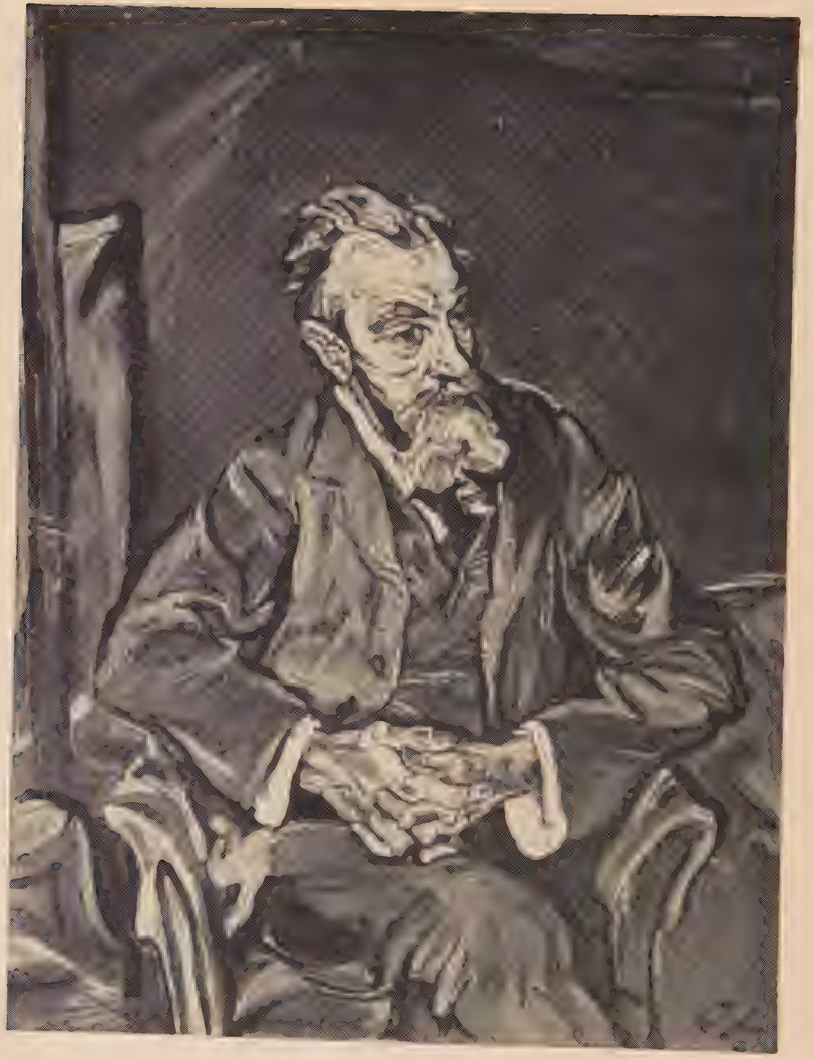
Mobile color has special advantages over other arts. There is something reposeful beyond words in the conditions of seeing it—in absolute darkness and silence. I imagine that people who like music but are bothered by the noise of it are going to hail mobile color joyously. I found in it, too, something of that quality which is so hard to describe, which metaphysicians call the fourth dimension. In the projection of this art in space I sensed a new dimension, a new direction. It reminds me to say that with Thomas Wilfred there stands, as leader in the development of an art of mobile color, Claude Bragdon, long known as architect, writer, stage designer, and fourth-dimensional theorist—and to some of us as experimenter in color-art. His organ, designed on a principle fundamentally different from Wilfred's, was at last reports stored away, unfinished, awaiting more auspicious days for completion. In the meantime still others, including the Synchromist leader Macdonald-Wright, are turning their inventive faculties and their passion for color toward the development of other instruments.

One can only guess at the future of this art, and wonder. Wilfred looks forward to the building of other organs and the training of color-organists. He sees the time when composers will bring him scores, perhaps first submitting sketch drawings of the primary theme, with notation of possible rhythms and accompaniment. The time will doubtless come when a bank of organs will be manipulated by a group of players, one carrying a solo part, perhaps, and the others an orchestral accompaniment—for the present limitations of the Clavilux arise largely from the organist's lack of more than the two hands God gave him. Other vistas open—marvels only surmised and emotional responses only vaguely and sub-consciously sensed in the past. But this much is sure: here is the beginning, or at least the first serious achievement, of an art as primitive, as complex, as capable of varied emotional beauty as music; and its medium is light—that light which was the earliest god of humankind, which to this day typifies all that is spiritual, joy-bringing and radiant. Perhaps, then, this is the beginning of the greatest, the most spiritual and radiant art of all.

MUSIC—BLACK, BLUE AND GREEN,
BY GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

XI

EXPRESSIONISM



PORTRAIT, BY OSKAR KOKOSCHKA

MAINE—THE SAIL BOAT,
BY JOHN MARIN

CEZANNE at the end of his search for the realization said, "I am the primitive of the way I have discovered." The translation really understates Cezanne's contribution. We must concede him more than a primitive's achievement. He was the first master of a new epoch. All the chapters of this book since Cezanne's have dealt with variations of the impulse he gave, except that on mobile color. The art of mobile color, in so far as it grew out of a confused notion of the art of painting, stems from Impressionism direct. Cezanne turned away from Impressionism to a search in the opposite direction. Instead of isolating color as an art, he wanted above all else to combine the new-found but frittered-away color values with solid compositional values; he sought to recapture the "organization" he had seen in certain great painters of the past.

In turning to Expressionism we return to the full current of Cezanne's influence. One cannot say immediately and without qualification that Expressionism *is* the "way" Cezanne "discovered." Only history can finally put limits to the word—and here we are no longer dealing with history but trying to keep afloat in the flood of contemporary practice. This much may be said immediately, however: No other movement since Cezanne has swept across the art world as has Expressionism; and every treatise on Expressionism dates the movement from Cezanne.

Neo-Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Synchromism — these were schools with particularized technical credos. They were doctrinaire groups tied to a method. Expressionism escapes any such limitation of technique or method. It is distinguished only by a difference in *approach* to art. It is broad enough to include the emotionally expressive artists out of all these other groups. It is only opposed to imitational art. It is broader in another way: it already has become a by-word of literary criticism, and the Expressionistic playwrights are even recognized as such here in America, and Expressionistic architecture is with us but seldom recognized. The point is that Expressionism is near to being accepted as a summary of the post-Impressionistic art movements, and not merely a phase.

There is still doubt about the first use of the term, and there are

LITHOGRAPH, BY FRANZ MARC

widely varying definitions of it. The word Expressionism certainly gained wide currency in Germany before other countries recognized its applicability to their own insurgents. The first artist-group to which it was generally applied was that which published the *Blaue Reiter* at Munich. Hermann Bahr, who wrote a book called *Expressionismus,* published in 1920, in his definition stressed expression of the artist's subjective emotion above everything else. He struck to the heart of the modern conception of painting and sculpture by denying the importance of objective as against subjective values. He also saw the word "Expressionism" as a good foil to the word "Impressionism," which had gone into history as the name of the last phase of realism. No other word seems so apt as Expressionism, if one's purpose is to emphasize the shift from impressionistic surface values to emotional values, from imitation to expression. Bahr defines the Expressionistic painter as one "who *must* paint, who *cannot* paint in any other way than he does paint, and who is prepared to hang for his way of painting." Subjective indeed!

The Munich group leaned heavily toward abstraction. Kandinsky was already a leader, Franz Marc's Cubistic reflection was dropping away into abstract pattern, and minor men perceived a new non-representational goal. Expression with this group became *soul*-expression. There was much talk of absolute "experience" on the part of the artist, of the painter "painting out of himself," of soul-substance. Fritz Burger, in his *Einfuhrung in die Moderne Kunst,* wrote that the Expressionistic work of art "does not want to be any longer the object of an æsthetically educated caste, but the embodiment of that incommensurable world which comprises our Inner Self. It will not deliver from the World but bring about for us the possession of the World's Inner Greatness, the wonderful wealth of variety in form of the Creative Power itself, which is the salvation and the ruin of us all." Burger seems to have defined Expressionism to accord with Kandinsky's practice.

A third definition, or group of definitions, at the other extreme, has to do with the expression of the inner truth rather than the surface aspects *of the object* seen by the artist. If we are to keep an anchor in objectivity, or frankly accept subject-matter as necessary albeit of secondary importance, there may be in the object a deeper reality, a structural truth, an essential character, a universal rhythm, which it is the artist's business to divine and to convey. (Remember Marc and the tiger.) That may fairly be called Expressionism too, in that it shifts emphasis from the surface to a deeper expressiveness in the object.

The only malicious definition of Expressionism that has gained any currency is that of Dr. Oskar Pfister, whose book called *Expressionism in Art* has recently appeared in an English translation. The author is a psycho-analyst and apparently has no particular interest in or background of knowledge of the arts. He frankly disclaims any but a biological and psychological intent. But he does not hesitate to tell the world what Expressionism is, æsthetically as well as scientifically. His definition is this: "The Ego, that is, the subjectivity and its varying states, engrosses the interest so much that the external object may not dispute its supremacy and either disappears or becomes unrecognizable. In what follows I understand as graphic Expressionism subjective presentation accompanied by total or almost total distortion of nature to the point of unrecognizability, or by suppression of all external reality." Later he speaks of "the psychical discharge into the work of art" as the "essential characteristic" of Expressionism; and again he says of the Expressionist painter, "all his pictures contain the fulfillment of secret desires, which are wholly hidden even from himself."

The trouble with Dr. Pfister's evaluation is that he narrows his field of observation to the obviously neurotic distress-ridden painters, finds their whole source of discordant creation in the reservoir of the subconscious, and overlooks form-values entirely. He treats what others consider a non-representative movement in art as if it were a search for a new sort of representation, with the objective source in subconscious memory and desire rather than in outward nature. He allows nothing for an absolute æsthetic value—for that thing which some of us believe is the conditioning factor of all truly modern art. He conceives art only as some sort of idea-transference. (Readers will find in his book an interesting series of analyses, and much material about solipsism and autism in art, and their relation to automatic cryptolaly and religious glossalaly. But these are hardly subjects for a Primer.)

I think that any definition of Expressionism, as the word is used in Europe and America today, would have to be broad enough to include all the developments upon which these earlier definitions were based. Personally I find myself using the term as a summary of the phases in which the emphasis is on *any* sort of expressiveness as against imitativeness—and I feel that that is the place it will find in history.

In short, I consider Expressionism to be that movement in art which transfers the emphasis from technical display and imitated surface aspects of nature to creative form; from descriptive and representative truth to intensified emotional expressiveness; from objective to subjective and abstract formal qualities. The greater *expressiveness* of this modern art may and usually does arise from three sorts of intensification: of the essential or structural quality or "rhythm" of the object as against its outward aspects; of the artist's subjective emotion, of the "image" emotionally conceived out of his passion for absolute (though probably unobtainable) æsthetic form; and of the essential characteristics of his materials. The *expressive form* which is most easily identified as the chief goal of the Expressionists, and which links them with certain periods and artists out of the past, is doubtless achieved ordinarily out of the virtues of all three elements, the expressiveness of structural truth in nature, the artists' emotions, and the expressiveness of materials; but it is the second, subjective emotional expression, which is at the heart of the matter.

This definition is purposely broad enough to include those artists who attempt abstract creation or are wholly contemptuous of "the trivial laws of nature," and those who merely say that it makes no difference how close to natural aspects you come or how far you distort *if* emotional intensification is your dominating concern; it allows for the new outlook on nature, the artist's divining and recording something there that isn't obviously on the surface, and for absolute self-realization; it further grants that there is a special sort of expressiveness in intensification of the particular virtues of each material. The Expressionist, in general, is visualized as saying to himself: "The artist must forget all the nonsense about imitating or representing nature; he must apprehend a sort of essential reality in whatever he is dealing with, and express in æsthetic form the emotion he has felt. He must cut through so much of nature as may stand in the way of intensification and liberation of his emotion." I have overemphasized, perhaps, the element of subject, but I wanted to guard against the common presumption that in opposing realism and denying surface nature, Expressionism gets away from the essentially *real.* It is the desire to go deeper within life that has led the Expressionists to deny the validity of surface observation.

If Expressionism is to be defined so broadly—and we need some term to label collectively the emotional-formal tendencies of post-Impressionistic art—it will be serviceable to glance back and see

STILL LIFE, BY HENRI MATISSE

which developments of the last thirty years come within the definition. The only really important exclusion is Gauguin and his followers in the *decorative* school. Sensuous expressiveness does, perhaps, link them closer to the Expressionists than to the realists —but decoration is what they are after and a decorative name should be theirs. It may be recorded that a great many modern painters feel that the essential *art of painting* goes deeper than that: to achieve purely decorative results is to miss the extra dimension that counts most. Two other exclusions must be noted: the Futurists, because they were at heart illustrators, merely practicing a new sort of representation; and the Gleizes-Metzinger wing of the Cubists, who went back to an insistence upon two-dimensional art.

The banner of the Expressionists might easily spread over Cezanne, van Gogh (rather by virtue of his utter devotion to paint as such than for subjective expression), the Cubists who searched as Picasso and Braque did for a deeper structural expressiveness, the Vorticists seeking "the hot impressions of life mated with Abstraction," and the entire Matisse-Picasso development with its emotional art stripped of trivialities and inessentials—together with the vigorous German, Russian and American off-shoots of this French school, and even a pale Cezannish reflection in England.

But it was Germany where the name was adopted and where the Expressionistic current runs strongest today, and it is there that we may well take up the story-thread of this chapter. Munich had been the home of secession and counter-secession during the early years of the new century. When Franz Marc, Vasily Kandinsky and others formed what was later to be called the first Expressionistic group—the *Blauen Reiters*—it might have been possible to trace back their origins to two sources: Paris and the French "*fauves*," and the "young Germany" movement which had already stirred German art and letters without any very definite æsthetic-radical aims. The Norwegian Edward Munch had come nearer than anyone else to crystallizing revolutionary thought in German painting—and there are doubtless roots out to Nietzsche, Russian Realism, Strindberg, etc. But the Munich development is the first important instance of a typical Expressionistic group coming into world prominence with that name tagged to them.

Of Kandinsky I have said enough. His most important fellow-painter was Franz Marc, a versatile and vigorous artist too little recognized outside Germany. He had something of Cezanne's color-form quality in his work throughout his mature years, and it is easy to trace the influence also of Cubism, Futurism and Kandinsky's sort of abstraction. His paintings, drawings and woodcuts dealt very largely with animals, but toward the end these were all but lost in the abstract "organization" of his canvases. The *Tierschicksale* (page 173) is one of the most famous examples. Since Marc has been labeled as an "animal painter," it will be illuminating for the reader to call to mind those artists of another era, Rosa Bonheur and Landseer. A comparison should indicate again how far subject-matter has latterly been sacrificed to some inner necessity of the picture's formal composition. At times, however, Marc fell prey to a Futuristic sort of illustrative art. The illustration a few pages back is one of a remarkable series of near-abstract drawings with incidental animal motives.

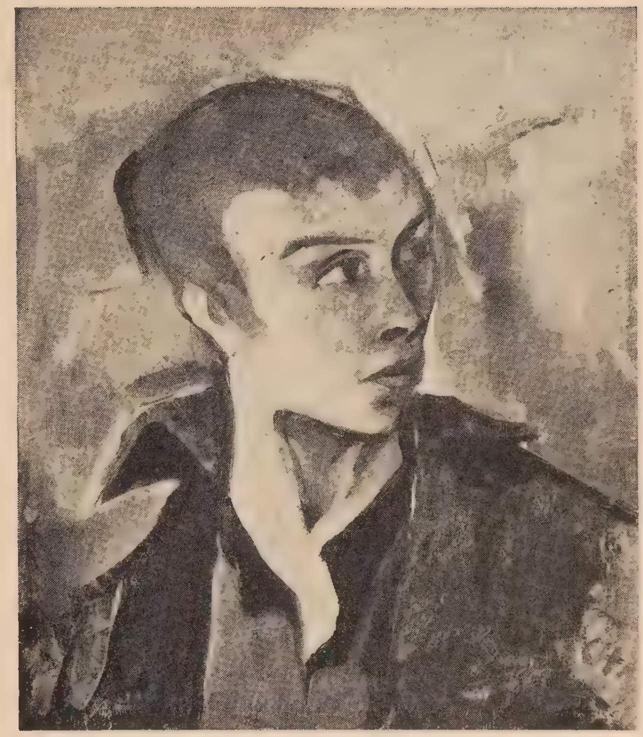
Among the others in the *Blauen Reiters* group were the Russian Javlensky, whose raw and vigorous portraits more than suggested primitive sources, and the American Albert Bloch, whose figure paintings seem in black-and-white reproduction to have a dream-like vagueness, although in the color they are usually brilliant and even, to unaccustomed eyes, insistent. Bloch has been through several "periods," but always he has been free from academic slavery to accidentals, and no American has been more thoroughly individual and independent. Few artists in this country—he has been back on this side for several years—have "distorted" so freely—or with so much sheer æsthetic compensation.

A man of prime importance who was closely associated with the Munich group, if not of it, is Paul Klee. His work usually looks like primitiveness of the "child-art" sort—paintings and drawings which might seem at first juvenile scratchings, but which never fail to have æsthetic validity. He is counted one of the chief figures in German Expressionism today, even though he seldom does anything more "important" looking than the three water-colors scattered through this book. Klee and Kandinsky are both associated at present with the group that has developed in Dessau what is perhaps the most interesting school and experimental laboratory of the arts existent anywhere, the Bauhaus.

PANEL, BY EMIL NOLDE

Oskar Kokoschka is the most significant figure in mid-European art today, ranking in importance with Picasso and Matisse. His work is so typical of modernism that I find that I have used four reproductions of his paintings as chapter headings and at other key points (pages 3, 29, 88 and 190). He, more clearly than any other, has built solidly on what Cezanne "discovered." But he has also gone beyond Cezanne if anyone has: he has accomplished authoritatively the broad, sweeping, structural, *organizational* thing which is the special object of search of the typically German Expressionists. He is not German by birth or early training; but his work and his maturer life have been in the full current of German radicalism. He is recognized there as perhaps the most essentially modern master, and he exerts—through his works—a wide influence. There are few things in this book which will so well repay study as his: for intensity, for directness, for rugged form.

When the current of the Munich development flowed into those others out of Berlin's "New Secession" group and the Dresden "Brücke" group which had long before broken new ground, there came into existence the full stream of German Expressionism. And where the South-German development had been spotty and individualistic and sometimes markedly derivative, this larger movement had a distinctive *cachet*. The paintings of Kokoschka, Javlensky, Cesar Klein, Carl Hofer, Max Pechstein, Emil Nolde, Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Otto Mueller, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Kaus, Heinrich Nauen, W. R. Huth, have an intensity, a look of "wading through nature," a ruthlessness in the search for form, which is wholly unparalleled elsewhere except in scattered individuals. If the academicians have been successively horrified by Cezanne, Matisse, the Cubists and the Futurists, they



WOMAN'S HEAD, BY CARL HOFER

still will find room for new shocks when they visit the up-to-date German galleries. And the German official galleries, unlike those of the rest of the world, do buy freely of radical contemporary works. Perhaps the semi-Socialistic government has something to do with it; more likely it is an indication of the thoroughness of the Expressionistic conflagration in Central Europe. It was the Director of one of Germany's greatest galleries who said to me last year that there was no longer any such thing as a conservative young painter in Germany: the country as a whole is committed to Expressionism. It is difficult for an American, Englishman or Frenchman to realize how far the "Junge Kunst" movement has gone; and it is an experience to go into the museums that correspond to the Metropolitan Museum, the Luxembourg and the London National Gallery, and there find not only Cezanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse, Kandinsky, Marc and Kokoschka, but the really wild things of Pechstein, Schmidt-Rottluff and Nolde. The National Gallery at Berlin, the great Dresden Gallery and the New State Gallery at Munich, all have their generous rooms of modernist work.

Matisse probably created the greatest of all French sensations for daring directness in painting. He seemed to have stripped art of every shred of ornament, triviality or extraneous meaning. But his work seems tame in true "Junge Kunst" company. Incidentally one may add that no other of the *Fauves* has had such influence upon the young German painters. But they set out for a fuller sort of intensification. As progress in modern music seems to conservative ears merely the discovery of more and more jarring discords, so the conservative eye is likely to see in these paintings only a step further in daring color combinations. But the saving point is that the painters know what they are after and why they are throwing away imitativeness and polish. With true German thoroughness the savants have written book after book on "The Form Problem in Art." And painter after painter throws himself headlong into the search. The "treat 'em rough" aspect of so much contemporary German art, so disturbing to the newcomer's eyes, is simply an indication that young Germany has caught a glimmer of some absolute quality named form, and has gone after it. We

NUDE,
BY KARL SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF

may be sure that not a great many will find it—or record it so that it speaks even to receptive minds; but with a Kokoschka the result is always authoritative, and Heckel, Nolde, Schmidt-Rottluff, Nauen and Pechstein have seemed to some of us to mark a new gain in organizational strength, to have pushed farther along the road travelled by *les Fauves.*

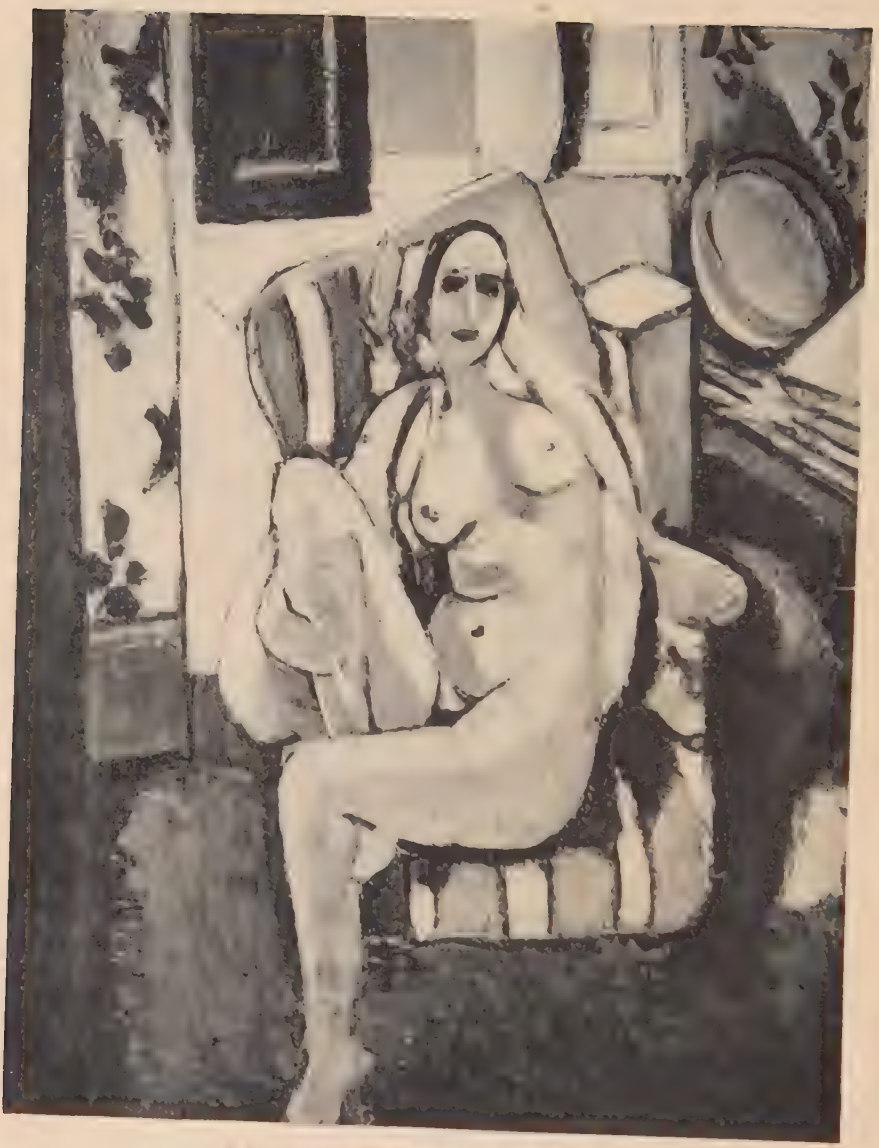
In any case, let no one fool himself into thinking that the whole effort is merely wild or that it marks retrogression. So much of feverish energy expended is bound to result in achievement. And if the men mentioned seem wild—if Cesar Klein is a Cezanne-follower who has thrown discretion and refinement to the winds, and if Pechstein sometimes seems a crude Matisse, and Schmidt-Rottluff seems committed to the crudities of negro art, at least Hans Purrmann carries on the Matisse tradition with more grace than anyone I can think of out of the rest of Europe, Josef Eberz tempers German ruthlessness with a certain technical restraint, and Lionel Feininger (originally American) is more interesting than any other Cubist except Picasso and Braque.

The quality most characteristic of German Expressionism is, perhaps, intensity. The groundwork of the revolution here was, as in France, a shift from surface aspects to constructive and emotional qualities; to a feeling for structure, stronger and moving color, and, of course, independence of nature. But the reaction to "cultured" painting, to refinement and technical display, to "society" art, was even more complete. Everything was sacrificed to recording the emotion while it was hot. Colors piled up without regard to nature or timid ideas of harmony, unessentials were forgotten, distortion came to be second nature, the painter rode roughshod out for structural feeling, compactness, intensity of emotion. Not nature, but the laws of the picture plane must be respected. The search goes on for the tension of volumes, for the unity of the form-and-color "effect," for a positive and negative spatial equilibrium within the canvas.

Even so I find that I have left out mention of the real extremists. Most notably they are Marc Chagall and Heinrich Campendonk. One cannot deny the validity of their canvases and woodcuts when considered without regard to subject. But there rises here the question where distortion for æsthetic purpose ends and mere perverseness begins. In Chagall's work particularly, the objective abnormality obtrudes constantly: it is not merely that planes are rearranged, colors arbitrary, or essentials built up at the expense of inessentials; heads are placed at the far corner from the bodies they once presumably rode upon, figures walk upside down or float across the sky, women have cow-heads, etc., etc. There is, too, an excess of bottles, vomitings, and general physical suggestiveness. In Georg Grosz this is often carried over into not only sexual suggestiveness but illustration of sex vice of every sort, picturing a world of prostitutes, avaricious and bestial men, and general tenderloin surroundings. This sort of thing may serve as a castigating force for the social organization that warps life, but it has lost all claim to being art—simply because the emphasis is on the objective and meaningful. It is a good time to repeat, perhaps, that for every truly important modernist artist there are a host of charlatans, shockers and incompetents. The whole movement, too, is mixed up with the backwash of war violence, unrestraint and, at points, insanity. We touch here again on Dada and Dr. Pfister's neurotic-subconscious, psychic-discharge Expressionism. But if there seems to be an overplus of shock for shock's sake, of horrors, profanity, sex perversion and supernaturalism in this current, we may look back to many a sane and clean Expressionist and know that the stream will come clear at last.

When I turn from German Expressionism to French, I know that I am getting back to something comparatively safe and sane, into an atmosphere less feverish and more charged with background and certainty. But I must add that I miss a little the quality of vigor and a certain intensity which are among the finest characteristics of contemporary German endeavor.

"Expressionism" must, indeed, be a broad term to cover the bulk of the radicals in Paris. For just now individualism (within limits) is the order of the day. Some critics feel that the lack of



NUDE, BY HENRI MATISSE

significant movements or new figures since the war argues a case of arrested development, others feel that this is the lull before a new storm, and at least one argues that painting is "done." But an art does not die so quickly, and Paris will not so easily give way as center of art-progress. In actual æsthetic achievement, the output of that one city can hardly be challenged for supremacy.

Matisse, even though he may seem to have settled into a rut, is still one of the three or four world leaders. Some may prefer the starkly simple things of twenty years ago to the softer, fuller Matisse product of today. But he is doing finely expressive work and must be counted in any roll-call of modern masters. Picasso, picturesque leaper from peak to peak of the modernistic range, has started school after school of radical experiment and search, the most notable being Cubism; but latterly he has been off on a vague hunt for some meeting-place of the classicists and the form-seekers. He wields an extraordinary world influence; but he seems to be fumbling a little about the shooting of his next bolt. His recent severe, rounded figure-studies have the appearance of seeking primarily sculptural values in painting; and his latest Cubistic experiments, fine as they are, add nothing to what he was accomplishing in that direction several years ago. But it is just as likely that he will stage a spectacular leap in the least expected direction at the least expected moment. In solid achievement, through all his periods, he remains probably the most significant painter living. (I have just seen John Quinn's remarkable collection of his work, a pageant of living beauty without parallel in any other group of modern canvases I can recall.)

Cubism drags on as a doctrinaire affair in Paris, but the wise ones seem to be those who got out with an equipment of a new vision and an enriched technique. Of the original *Fauves*—the "wild ones" of the early years of the century—the most important, aside from Picasso and Matisse, have turned out to be André Derain, Georges Braque, Maurice de Vlaminck, and Othon Friesz. Friesz has come closer than any other Frenchman to achieving that sort of intensity and structural strength that is so marked across the Rhine. He piles up his materials, he has vigor, he builds joyously and carelessly. And, as in the Germans, there is beyond the apparent carelessness of surface a sound structure and amazing compactness. Here is a man who adds to what he learned out of Cezanne and Matisse.

Not quite so much can be said of Vlaminck's suave canvases. Strength is just what he lacks. He makes Cezannism appealing—but seldom gets any farther.

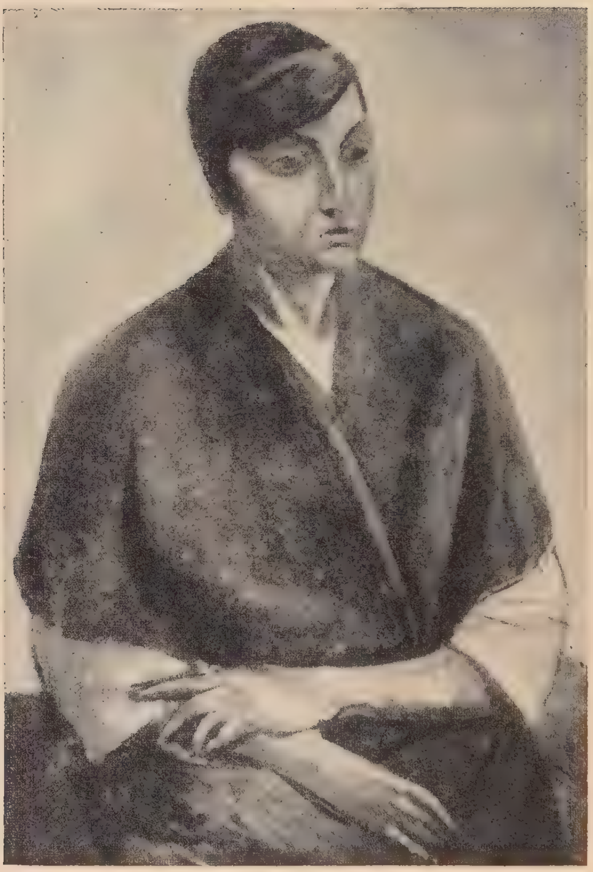
André Derain by contrast has kept full within the current of post-Cezanne modernism. He has been Cezannesque, Fauvish, Cubistic, and classical-Expressionistic. If he has never startled, being a follower, he at least has kept to the front with Matisse and Picasso. And he emerges today as one of the most influential men in French art. He assuredly ranks next to Picasso in world importance. Perhaps the way in which he has incorporated each new discovery of his group into the essential French "good painting" has something to do with his popularity.

There is a suspicion about that the essentially *French* radicalism is content to sit only part way on the left; certainly the Spaniard Picasso, the Italian Futurists, the American Synchromists, the Russian Ballet and German Expressionism, have borne in a great

AUTUMN HARVEST, BY OTHON FRIESZ

deal of the extremer radicalism. One wonders whether, let alone, France might not prefer Marquet and Bonnard and Marie Laurencin—moderate modernists all. The French spirit perhaps could be best traced through Renoir, Bonnard, Vuillard, Marquet, Laurencin. There is a softer, prettier, more sensuous emotion about these—not the stark, uncompromising sensibility that animates alike the Cubists, the Vorticists, the German and Russian Expressionists.

But these painters are, someone opines, the weak sisters of the revolution. Hardly that—but not *ruthlessly* radical either. Their



ITALIAN WOMAN, BY ANDRÉ DERAIN

daring is tempered with an inherited grace. Which raises the subtle question how far a noble tradition may become a handicap in times of change. How far will France, having the only living national tradition in painting which is worth having, stand by, renounce or modify that tradition in conflict with the forces of modernism? Or will there be enough Derains to follow, consolidate the progress, make it sane?

Marie Laurencin retains much that is typically, wholesomely, gracefully French. She has given way to modernist pressure to the extent of abandoning truth of aspect. But here is no urgent carrying on of Cezanne's search or of later experiment. An occasional portrait may go back to a simplicity that is Matisse's, a bit of a still life may catch something of abstract form—but in general the emotional expressiveness is not very deep. Marie Laurencin's virtues are rather in an adorable femininity. She gives us of herself—her lovely French self. The innumerable graceful girls of her pictures, the decorative arrangements, the cooling colors, these are—like Gauguin's paintings—of an order for which we are grateful (and when have we not been grateful for French painting?), but they have lured us from the highroad of the moderns. In sculpture there is the similar graceful radicalism of Joseph Barnard—attractive but hardly profound. (See page 274.)

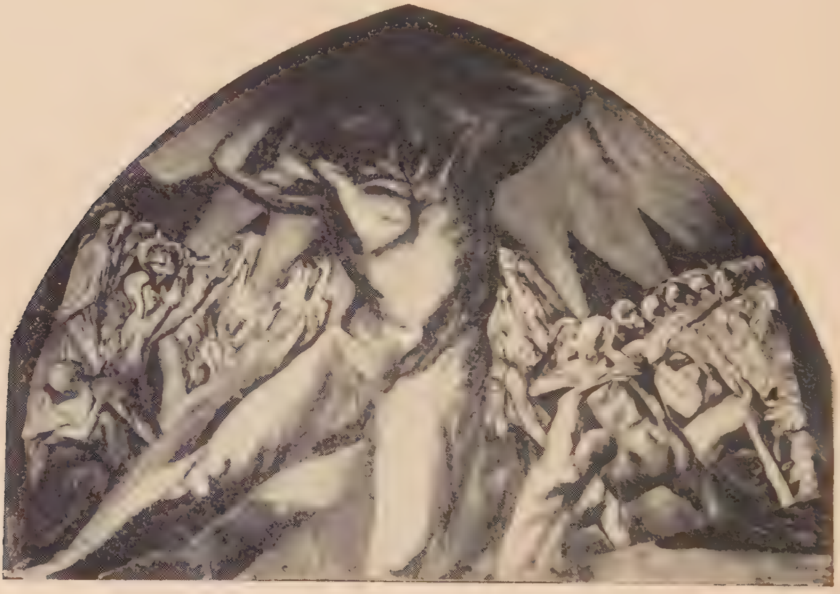
Dufy, Lhote, Rouault, Segonzac, Pascin, de la Fresnaye, these are painters nearer in the full current—and yet not one a master in the sense that Matisse was one and Kokoschka is one. Beyond them I find in my jottings and notes about France a bewildering array of competent, able and progressive men, who would bulk as local leaders anywhere except in Paris. Some of them are immature, some are following Cezanne or Picasso but without genius, some doubtless are experimenting in fields that will be fruitful later. There is the saving point: you cannot bring together so many competent, thoroughly trained, sensitive artists and not reap a harvest of creative work every so often.

CIRCUS, BY MARIE LAURENCIN

The more I consider the matter, the more I think there *is* a perceptible lull in French art. But out of the hosts who gather in Paris, if a new Matisse does not come, a new foreign-born Picasso will arise. In addition to her own, France harbors hundreds of the most talented from elsewhere. Painters as important as the Polish Kisling and the Japanese Foujita and the Russian Larionoff are there. Someone has suggested that the next cycle may start when

NUDES IN THE OPEN AIR,
BY KARL SCHMIDT-ROTTLUFF

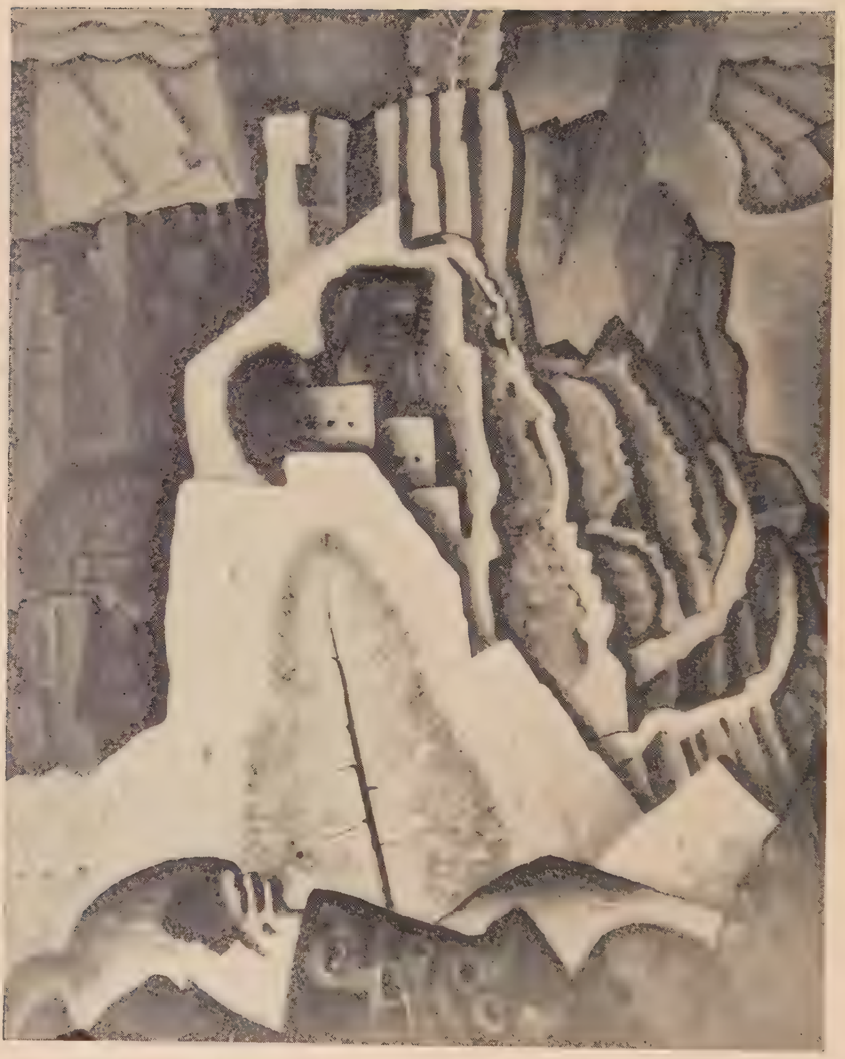
the brilliant Paris hosts understand what it is that German Expressionism captured in its ten years of isolation—by way of compact structural organization, of volumes and tension fixed within the canvas. Students can probably learn more at the moment from Hofmann of Munich or from the "masters" at Dessau than in any art school in Paris. There is hope too that the native effort of painters in Russia, Germany, Mexico or the United States may crystallize into achievement that is beyond any formula established in France. Expressionism in architecture, sculpture and the theatre art has developed almost wholly in Central Europe, Russia and America. But what matter, if the transition really is made from representative to expressive art? There is a universality about truly creative art, which defies borders. Expressionism belongs to the world, not to a nation or race.



MURAL AT POMONA COLLEGE,
BY JOSE CLEMENTE OROZCO

XII

THE GEOGRAPHY AND ANATOMY OF MODERN ART



CLIFF DWELLINGS, NO. 3, BY RAYMOND JONSON

THE REAPERS, BY MAURICE STERNE

NATIONALISM is going out; but there will always be a geography of art. And a smattering of the geography of modern art is, I suppose, more or less necessary to a comprehension of the subject as a whole. There used to be great national schools, where racial characteristics were powerful in shaping the forms of expressiveness. But as nationalism becomes diluted, art tends to become cosmopolitan. The one great center of the graphic arts in recent generations, France, has become a center geographically rather than racially.

There is, of course, a French tradition, a French spirit in painting and sculpture. But stronger than that has been the tradition that Paris is the hub of the art world, that America and England and Scandinavia and Russia and Germany and the Mediterranean countries must send their students there to learn "good painting." Perhaps that same "good painting" which was the French tradition has become the world tradition—is France's gift to the world-artist. But the racial element inevitably is pretty well watered out by now. Like the old New-England Americanism, it has been mixed, fused, almost lost as an entity. Paris is still geographically the center, but a Paris wherein Russians, Spaniards, even Americans sit in the high councils of (unofficial) art.

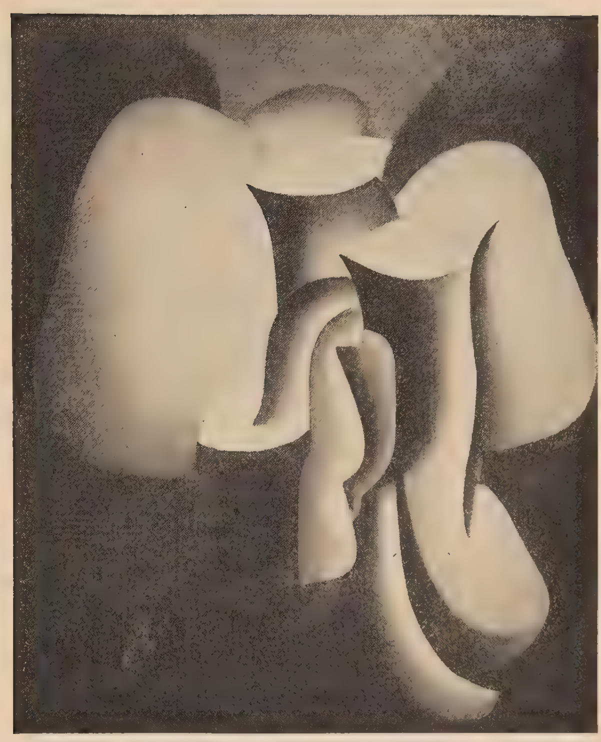
How far the greatly increased facilitation of travel, and the rapid exchange of ideas through almost instantaneous news service and the phenomenal growth of magazine and book production, will tend to break down national barriers permanently cannot be prophesied. No one can be sure whether we shall have again the sort of overconcentration of art activities illustrated in the Paris of the 19th Century. Munich was beginning to attract considerable numbers of Russian and American students even before the war; and the time is fast passing when any American, if he really has the stuff in him, needs to go for training farther than New York. He might even better turn his face Westward. But what I am getting at is that the spread of what we today call modern art has been wider and swifter than any similar development in art history. Provincialism and insularity are less excusable than ever before, old frontiers are disappearing, we are all becoming world-minded.

Geographically, America is for the first time on the creative art map. If we were there a quarter-century ago it was largely as a French province, 100-per-cent loyal. Today we take freely from Paris, but also from Russia and Germany. Drawing new strength from our own rediscovered West, we are beginning to give to the world as well as take. What complexion any discernible racial strain in our art shows or will show, is a question absolutely defying analysis. We are typical of the new de-concentration.

To learn geography properly, one must tour. In these pages we have already covered France and Germany pretty thoroughly, although the name-posts were not always out. We need only summarize developments there—then off to the rest of Europe and America to examine currents of achievement and influence more particularly. Italy we may mark off as having contributed little except the furore over the clever Futurists. The lone figure of Modigliani survives importantly, for a series of portraits sensitive and rhythmical, and almost as simple as negro sculpture.

Paris was the home of the first revolution. No one would expect it to develop anywhere else, because the major portion of the world's proficient painters were probably working there at the time. It takes a flourishing settled-down art to beget a vigorous revolution. At any rate Cezanne was French. Paris might also be marked as a sort of false cradle of modernist architecture. The "art nouveau" was nourished there—and died young. But real modern architecture is more German than French, perhaps more Dutch than German, more American than either. Musical progress, too, has been spotty; the modern theatre belongs largely to central and northern Europe; and who shall say what was the origin of modern verse? It is in the visual arts that Paris dominates the rebellion. After Cezanne, the Cubists are largely a local group. The *fauves*, geographically centered at Paris, are a mixed company, and the gospel begins to spread. After Matisse a few individuals are world figures, but the "movement" no longer revolves entirely about Paris. In the chapter on Expressionism I noted the individualistic aims of the several leaders in France today—the post-*Fauve* period. There is undeniably a lull in creative activity, a lack of unity of effort, a slowing up—age rather than youth at the front. France is perhaps paying the price of her early world-leadership. Gaining leadership, and with it satisfaction and self-sufficiency, Paris has been suffering from an in-growing tendency—and consequent isolation. The world's capital has itself become provincial. New blood is needed. There is even a whisper that French modernist artists should go to school a little to German art. One can imagine the horror and contempt with which such a suggestion would be met in a Parisian atelier. But contempt, particularly when colored with an old political animosity, hardly puts forward the uses of open-mindedness—and open-mindedness is part and parcel of true modernism.

It is only open-minded to grant that what goes to make up German Expressionism is at the moment the most *vigorous* art development anywhere in the world, having its roots in music, in the theatre, in literature, as well as in painting and sculpture. I confess that it is difficult for me to reconcile with the recent creative progress in these arts, certain things in German life and customs: a general coarseness of character among the bourgeoisie, the way the German women wear their clothes, the stolid seriousness of earlier national art. It is true, too, that they seldom breed an individual leader and prophet of their own; but they recognize and absorb world geniuses more readily than any other nation. If it was not Cezanne or Matisse who did the groundwork for "Expressionismus" in paint-



FLOWER FORMS, BY CHARLES SHEELER

ing, it was the Norwegian Edward Munch or the Swiss Hodler. If it is sad to see Gordon Craig, chief revolutionary figure in the modern theatre, an exile from his native England and almost wholly without influence there, it is not difficult to see that his ideas have revolutionized the German theatres. The American Frank Lloyd Wright is quite without noticeable honor at home, but the Germans have books about him, acknowledge him as a modern master, and build after his fashion. The new generation in Germany is reaping the benefit of this receptiveness in the old. They are making the

NUDE, BY YASUO KUNIYOSHI

derived traditions their own in a new synthesis, a living achievement. Perhaps German thoroughness—at other times called ruthlessness—is pushing it through to achievement. At any rate, there it is: painting which *collectively* has more of living quality, of unity of purpose, possibly more of a beyond-Cezanne organizational strength within the picture, than any other can show; the beginnings of an architecture that is of today, honest in construction, true to materials, expressive; and a theatre which is the most interestingly alive and forward-moving (and I suppose the most enjoyable theatrically for those who understand the language) of all in the contemporary world, except the Russian.

The theatre under the Soviets is the most vigorous and experimental anywhere: the most modern in stagecraft, the most virile in acting, and claiming a group of playwrights at least alive to the social and economic pattern of the age. Architecture has turned wholly Functionalist, but the revolution there has been too sudden to permit development of a rich and satisfying creativeness. In general, the progress in the other arts has been more notable as a socializing process: art has been put upon a new non-aristocratic, non-commercial basis. There has been gained a freedom unknown to artists in the past; there is official support for a bewildering number of "art projects"; and it is certain that the leaders of the Communist government have shown themselves wiser, more sympathetic and more alive to the basic human need for art than the leaders in any imperial, republican or capitalistic civilization.

In the Russian galleries (in 1931) I noted little that might not be an extension of German Expressionism, and I failed to find evidence of any painter who might stand beside Picasso or Kokoschka. But there is a wealth of experimental effort, and enough of solid achievement to indicate that the young Russians are traveling the same road, creatively, as the "junge kunst" groups in Germany, France and America: the road, considered by some of us to be the highway to the future, first marked out by Cezanne, and still called "radical" by the conservatives. Nor can one fail to note that there seems to be a definite relationship between the new painting, the political modernism of the Soviet state and the decline of ancient religions.

Meanwhile Russian artists among the exiles from the Soviet Union are prominent in many countries. Particularly a group from the North has helped determine the channel of German radicalism. Most important is the influence of Kandinsky and Javlensky in the *Blaue Reiter* group. Paris has offered asylum to Soutine, Larionoff, Goncharova, Soudekine, and others. Here in America we see represented all the shades of Russian progressivism, from the slightly radical Anisfeld and Roerich to the intensely-so Burliuk and Archipenko and Boris Deutsch.

Almost as interesting as Russia, as a hunting ground for signs of the new art, is Mexico. The artists there exhibit the same qualities of vigor and independence, coupled with an intense social consciousness. A peasant directness, a primitive simplicity, marks much "modern" Mexican painting. The superior art pundits of an earlier generation in the United States, French-trained, failed to recognize any real cultural achievement in Mexico; but today the critics are likely to rank Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco above any contemporary "American" painters. There is something resembling a Rivera cult, beside an Orozco cult. Certainly we all should be the gainers for knowing what there is of universal values, of creative expression, to the South of us—as in the Orient—instead of bowing further before devitalized Western Europe. We do well to know the new Europe too, but the balance would be served by exploration nearer home.

Holland, original home of Vincent van Gogh, has since developed no individual figure of his stature. But no other country is more pervadingly modern in the thought and practice of its artists. This is especially true in architecture, where the pioneer Berlage trained up a new generation of original builder-artists who escape entirely the imitative "styles" to which ninety-nine per cent of the Western world's architects have been slaves. The painters van Dongen and Jan Sluyters are best known beyond the Dutch borders: van Dongen for a talent that is anything but realistic, with a catchy and light sort of modernness that has made him a vogue in Paris; Sluyters with a less personal but more firmly emotional and structural quality.

Speaking of catchy things and two-dimensional things, one harks back inevitably to the Viennese-Munich decorative school of art—that development which came between *"l'art nouveau"* and true modernism, escaping the vulgarity of the one and missing the spirit of the other. Vienna has had her finely expressive painters: the lamented Anton Faistauer, a group of Kokoschka-influenced men, and Egon Schiele and Wiegele and Kolig. But to many of us the typical art of Vienna is the objective art of utter grace and exquisite sophistication. Style is deified, connoisseurship honored, an ultra-refined feminine sort of decorative beauty becomes the only objective. "Stylization" tells the story: style for its own sake. We love these things the Viennese make for the gratification of our senses: the luscious decorative paintings of Klimt, the insinuating decorative architecture of Hoffmann and Witzmann, the smart decorative jewelry and vases and small sculptures and lettering of Dagobert Peche and Richard Teschner. And when we see the furniture and handicraft, with its generally simple, elegantly simple lines, but with a bit of seductive ornament placed with absolute rightness, we wish that all our stodgy craftsmen could go to school to the Austrian *Werkbund* for a while, that Joseph Urban would spread his New York branch of the Vienna *Werkstaette* until all America can feel the decorative influence—as all of Germany so richly has. In its ornamental way, this Viennese movement has been one of the most complete and most wholesome triumphs in the short annals of modern art. This group found a style. The catch is that in the absolute arts—not craft-arts—style and ornament are the *last* things that the modernists want. Vienna can decorate a given surface—canvas, gold, textile or built wall—more charmingly than any other city in the world. But modern art, of the serious sort, must go *below* the surface or die.

SILVER MATCHBOX,
BY DAGOBERT PECHE

England. The England where once Turner pointed a new way for world art. But now an England strangely cold to change. Somehow the word Expressionism simply will not come in connection with any British activity. The form-arts have never prospered here. The English have had no genius in music, and little creative music for centuries; they have hardly had a first-rate talent in sculpture up to the present decade. Their architecture, except for the homelike cottage, is in general coldly correct and imitative. They have scored beyond all others recently in intellectual drama, but their theatre is least touched of any in Europe by the wave of

Expressionism. And aside from the theorizing of the Vorticists and the paintings of Wyndham Lewis, the modernism of English painters is an echo of nearby Parisian developments. The American progressive always marvels, I think, at the vagueness of that echo when he considers the fewness of the hours that measure the distance between London and Paris.

Emotional intensification is at the very heart of Expressionism, and emotional sensibility is not an English trait. (England has remained national, I think, more than any other important Western country.) English painting has ever tended toward illustration and away from problems of form. It is little wonder then, that aside from Lewis, one hears no large modernistic noise out of Britain; echoes from the French salons constitute the bulk of the undertone. Roger Fry practises an attractive sort of intellectual Cezannism, Harold Gilman was a sort of English van Gogh, with honest vision and solid color, and C. W. R. Nevinson has absorbed successively Futuristic, Cubistic and other techniques but never got far below any surface—although one "likes" his canvases. Clive Bell opines that Duncan Grant is the one English world-figure in painting since Constable, and the only one worthy to stand with the world's foremost modernists. His honestly British form-seeking landscapes and still-lifes hardly deserve to rank so high—but I hasten to repair the average by saying that men like Paul Nash and Mark Gertler and Edward Wadsworth give us hope that, after all, structure and form are finding their way into British painting. For these are painters who are doing work only a little short of great accomplishment. One must add the names of Vanessa Bell and J. D. Fergusson as significant also. But the greatest artist living in England today is, I hazard, the American-Jewish sculptor Jacob Epstein—of whom, and the native Eric Gill, I shall have much to say in a later chapter. Of course the greatest living Englishman in the field of the arts, by circumstance more prophet than practitioner, is Gordon Craig of Italy—whom we shall meet again in still another chapter.

America, English-derived, English puritanical, English provincial in so many matters, offers a curious contrast to England in most of the fields of art. Not that America has been wildly radical in face of English coldness, or generally art-loving. Far from it! We have had a long, hard struggle against Puritan and Anglo-Saxon tradition, and our artists have always been half-starved. But in such radicalism as we have with us, the quality is anything but British. Nor is it any longer quite 100-per-cent French. There is even a discernible native note in it. Our most indisputable advance has been in architecture, an art still academic and dead in both England and France. We have long had sculpture near to our hearts, and if we have there somewhat echoed Paris, the sound still has reverberated with a native fullness. We have never had a playwright to compare with the English intellectual product, but our young theatre, unlike the British, is fairly alive with Expressionistic desires and experiment. About these three arts of sculpture, architecture and the theatre I shall have more to say in coming chapters. It is the quality of American painting that I would explore here.

The background is in general the weak Impressionism and the tired academicism of 57th Street, together with a very live virile native Impressionism, boasting a group of show painters with a virtuosity unequalled except in France along the entire belated-Impressionist cycle. The quality of the modernism which for

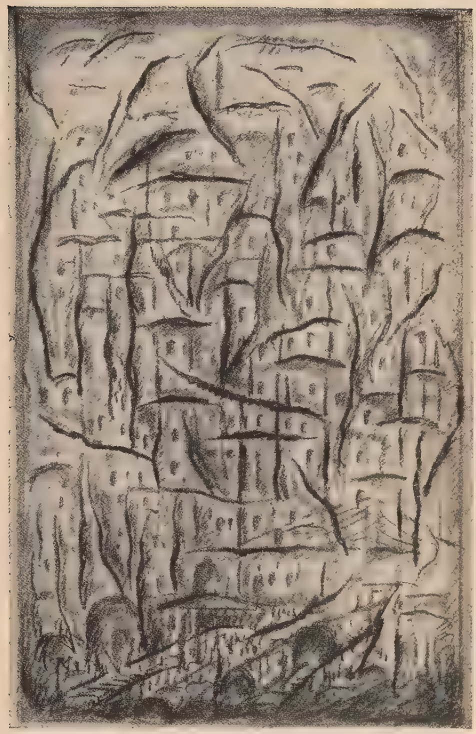
CAUCUS, BY WALT KUHN

fifteen years or so has struggled toward recognition before this background, has been based, I think, on an early realization, on the part of perhaps a dozen painters, that the realistic-descriptive era in painting was over and that the form-quality in Cezanne and Matisse held the key to the future. I am putting the statement thus, because I think it *was* recognition of an accomplished break, and not individual vision, that pointed the way for most of the new men on this side of the Atlantic. The ground must have been fertile, however, and creative sensibility richly there, or we should not have had such fine individual achievements as Marin's, O'Keeffe's, Kuhn's, Hartley's, Sterne's, Kuniyoshi's, Jonson's.

If the group as a whole has failed to register in a great way, it has been because the search for formal qualities was too implicitly accepted as part of the new faith, too doctrinairely adhered to, not come at out of individual emotion. The anchor in objectivity was too often chosen to serve a set purpose, thus leaving out the life quality, failing to enrich the finished product with emotional overtones. But it was something that so long ago so many American painters drew away from display-illustration. Expressionism in America has a history back to the first decade of the century.

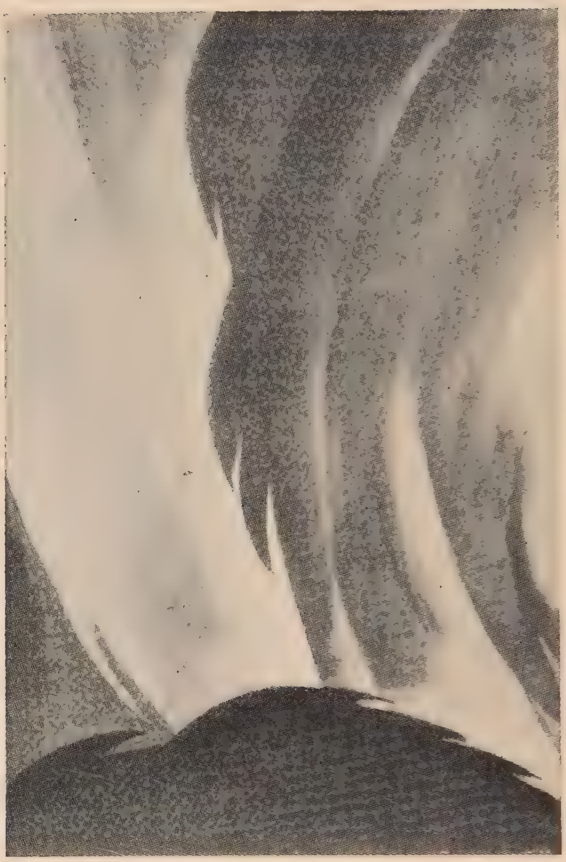
The date might almost be fixed by reference to the calendar of exhibitions at the Photo-Secession Gallery—the famous "291"—in New York. And the artist who is likely to be named oftenest in connection with the first quarter-century of American post-Impressionism, when the history of the movement is written, is Alfred Stieglitz. He knows better, instinctively, what *expression* is than any other American. In his photography he has given us a record that is a miracle of the machine as slave to artistic sensibility. He also has that gift for infecting other men with enthusiasm and creative impulse which made "291" an oasis in New York for many years. In the pre-war years most of what was most worth while in American painting centered there. Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso, Braque, were introduced to America, as were lesser figures like Picabia, Henri Rousseau, de Zayas, Brancusi and Nadelman—and "special" things like Rodin's drawings, Geiger's etchings, negro sculpture and children's drawings.

The first collective exhibition of American moderns was held at



NEW YORK,
BY ABRAM WALKOWITZ

"291" in 1910, and it is notable that already so important a group as Dove, Hartley, Weber and Marin was included. The first Marin show had been in 1909, and Alfred Maurer and Marsden Hartley were shown in the same year. Marin and Hartley one-man exhibitions followed at intervals until the closing of the gallery in 1917; Max Weber had his own show in 1911, Dove in 1912, Walkowitz in 1912 and 1916 and Bluemner in 1915. And finally Georgia O'Keeffe exhibited in 1916. Stieglitz as a personality affected the art development of all these leaders.



STORM CLOUDS IN SILVER,
BY ARTHUR G. DOVE

The first big general exhibition was the famous international "Armory Show" in 1913, which fortunately was not New York's alone. It will go down in history as the most important landmark of the "movement." It showed the American experimenters that already their fellow-artists overseas had broken from traditional limitations. Since then several galleries owned by dealers have "turned modern." The Societé Anonyme and the Museum of Modern Art now afford wall space to the newest or the old-time rebels, and there are art magazines specializing in the presentation of progressive and heretical works—and modernism seems in danger of becoming popular in the West no less than in the East.

John Marin and Georgia O'Keeffe are perhaps the Americans who have escaped most freely and most joyously from the confines of the older painting. They seem to revel in a free playing with form, without the slightest trace of self-consciousness. No man anywhere is more master of the watercolor medium than is Marin. He is beyond it and free for expression. He not only is no slave to transcription of nature, but hardly holds to objectivity in the slightest degree. And yet there is never the feel of his reaching for abstraction as a separate thing: there is always enough of contact with the perceived world to quiet the mind. Beyond that the magic of emotion is almost invariably there—the realization, the rhythmic order. The only valid criticism of his work comes not from the academicians but from the modernists who feel that his achievement is too much in one key. But in its limited range it is magnificent.

Where Marin seems to capture emotional intensity rapidly, brilliantly, with feverish abandon, getting down the palpitating image broadly in emotional outline—Georgia O'Keeffe seems to intensify calmly, to work through clear-headedly in silence, but with heart no less stirred and kept aflame in her steady way. She wanders the whole field from apples to abstraction. She is bold, but always within a harmonious restraint; her canvases are compact, the design counting strongly, color emotional, the absolute feeling poised with

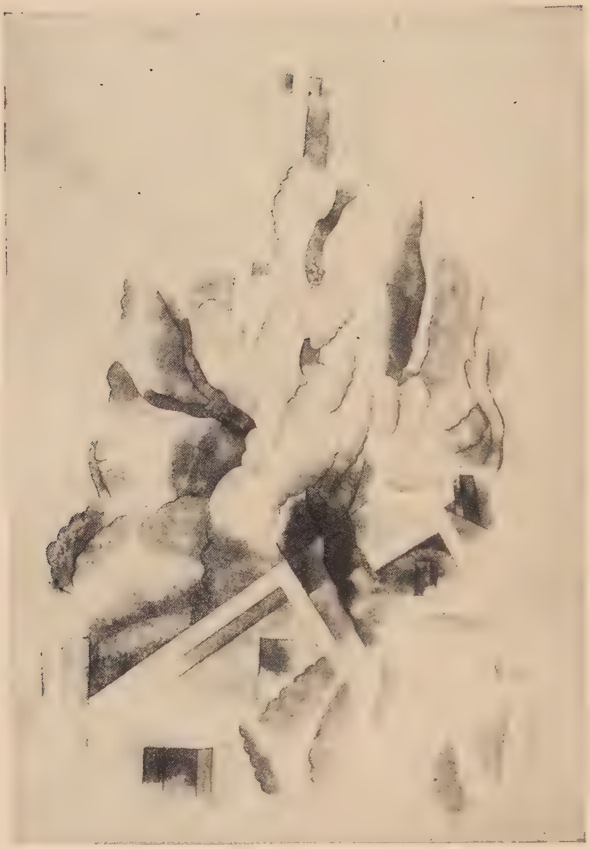
THE WHITE CLOWN, BY WALT KUHN

exquisite certainty. Order here is conceived femininely, musically. In the still-lifes the corners, the patches, the objects answer each other compositionally. The abstract "arrangements"—subtly geometrical and hard as compared with Kandinsky's soft spirit-wanderings—are like planes out of space, made living with color, meeting with paper-edge sharpness or rounding into perfect breast-like contours. Incidentally her canvases more than those of any other artist might afford Thomas Wilfred the perfect theme for one of his mobile color improvisations. Contrast, organization, play of textures, woman's emotion—made expressive in paint.

A true cosmopolitan, a constant seeker, more a dreamer, wanderer back and forth—America to Europe, Europe to America, East to West, West to East—Marsden Hartley is less stable than these others, but shows a wider diversity in exhibition. His native New England, a still-life and decoration period, a Far West period (wherein he made Cezanne's direct influence his own more surely than any other American), a formalized arranged-object period—all these are easily marked in retrospect. Never merely a transcriptionist, he has grown steadily in power, in devotion to a hidden order; more than a competent painter in each of the branches he has essayed, he has justly built up an international reputation.

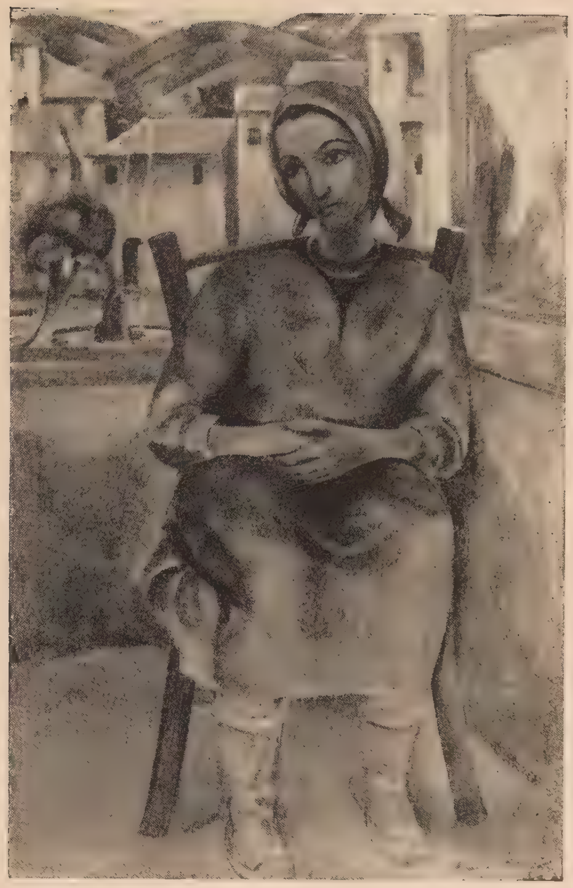
Walt Kuhn, I imagine, could more easily than any other American send to Paris a group of canvases of such strength, richness and diversity that they would stand up brilliantly in any exhibition there. He has most definitely made himself master of the French "fine painting" as that tradition has been absorbed into modernism by men like Matisse and Derain. I have seen canvases of his that might go without apology into that company, finely organizational things, moving, masterly. He is more a product of his training, less individualistic, by token of that same mastery—but creativeness and sensibility are richly there.

There are those who count that of the Americans Charles Demuth most completely and definitely captures "form." He almost has a method for it, a soft ground of rounded forms and a brittle geometrical organization against it. When he gets it right, it speaks clear and true emotionally. But too often his utter simplification, his elimination of everything extraneous, leaves the canvas a little empty, the color a little vague.



HOUSE AND TREE FORMS,
BY CHARLES DEMUTH

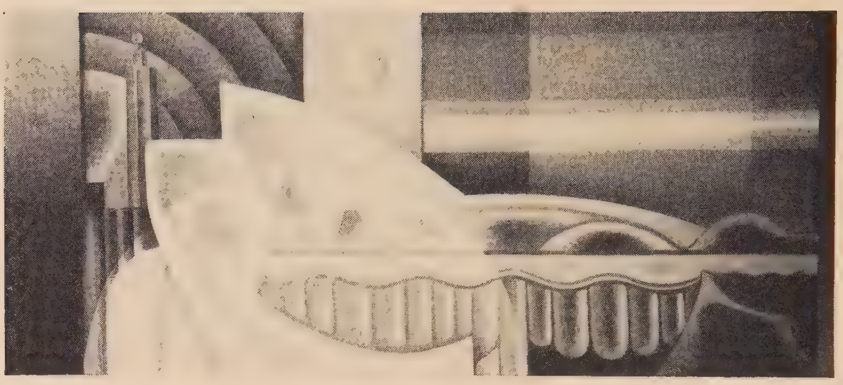
Of the "291" group there survive significantly, beside Marin, O'Keeffe and Hartley, three others: Max Weber, Arthur G. Dove and Abram Walkowitz. Dove is most known by virtue of concentration on one thing—or is it a sign of deeper emotion? No one else paints in his earthy, almost dull colors, or keeps so close to earth and the familiar in subject-matter. Very richly he has a sense of abstract form. I asked him about the making of a sketch for a



PORTRAIT OF A PEASANT GIRL,
BY MAURICE STERNE

painting which we were examining. He said that he drew it while knee-deep in flowing water, looking downstream into the woods; but that his friends called it *Penetration*—which came nearer to his intention. I leave the reader to struggle with the balance of objective and abstract elements in such an approach.

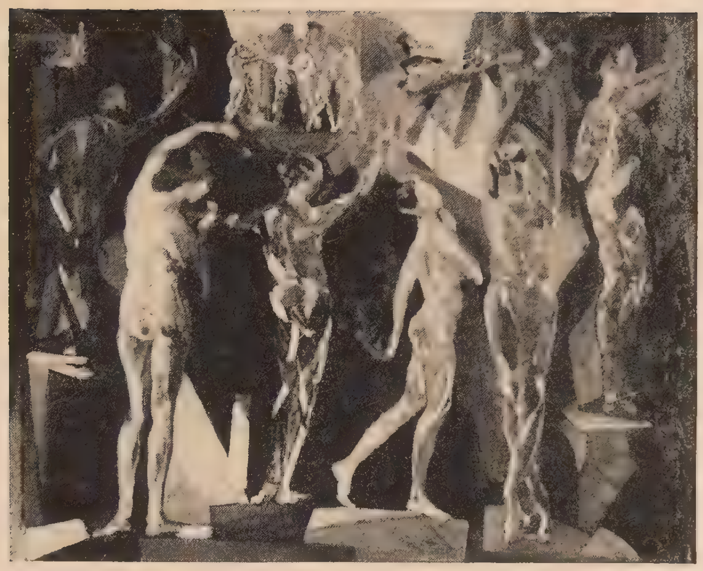
One misses the modern intensity of color in Dove; but I am



REPOSE, BY RAYMOND JONSON

reminded that Walkowitz occasionally brings in something without color at all, and has the very quality we have been talking most about. See his drawing, *New York.* And Walkowitz is at times, too, a decorator whom I would trust to do me a colored panel before almost any other artist I can name. Weber was an early Cezannist, one of the first American pioneers, with a fine talent, if a little derivative at times—from Cezanne, Picasso, Rousseau. His special gift, I should say, is for organization. He came near to grasping that structural thing beyond even Cezanne which the German Expressionists are so feverishly after.

Our business being to understand the new, it is natural that we turn to the extreme radicals rather than to evolutionary figures. Otherwise it would be obligatory here to sketch the careers of several older men: particularly George Bellows, a vigorous and original painter, and likely to outlast the entire late-Impressionist group; and John H. Twachtman, John Sloan, William Glackens, Maurice Prendergast, George Luks. But only occasionally could these men be called Expressionistic in the true sense.



FACADE, BY ARTHUR B. DAVIES

Arthur B. Davies pleases the conservative radicals more than any other American painter. He was revolutionary enough in the early days to get himself put down as a rebel, and he has always fought the good fight for open-mindedness and freedom of speech. He was individualistically poetic in a time when realism ruled, and later he grafted Cubistic flatness on to his delicate method. But Cubism gave him a surface variation rather than a spirit, or deeper structure. He has remained his very charming, poetic, far-away self, lacking in modern power, directness, compactness—but sensitive, delicately colorful, inviting us to a sweet feminine refuge. With just a little more substance he might have demanded a place like Redon's, as one of the Great Independents. As it is, he never seems quite to belong to the true modernist group (perhaps we distrust his popularity!) and yet no one ever leaves him out. An individual, fine-tempered, lonely achievement.

I explained once that I had no intent to be exhaustive. But even a primer must mention the names in so living a group as now paints, modernly, from New York to Santa Fé and California. There is Henry L. McFee, a sturdy painter who simply has the "quality" beyond dispute, and Preston Dickinson, whose drawing on page 244 is typical, and Charles Sheeler, a path-breaker who tries constantly to isolate "form" in both painting and photography. Man Ray is likewise intellectually interested in building pictures without affectation or flourish, and he has felt around in various media—even the air-brush of the "commercial artist" and the makeshifts of the Dadaists—but somehow I carry away reluctantly an impression of coldness and unemotional design. Then, too, Maurice Sterne is a man whose work in paints, black-and-white and sculpture, cautiously unconventional at first but latterly with the true ring, would arrest attention in any company; and Thomas Benton, who lacks color but gives a new significance to figure organization; and Macdonald-Wright, getting back from theoretical Synchromism to brilliant and appealing form-*and*-color compositions. And then someone asks, what of Oscar Bluemner, pictorial Cubist without being slave to Cubism, Samuel Halpert, important landscapist, Louis Bouché, who really ought to be a great painter but still only promises it, and William Yarrow, a certain "comer," and Walter Pach, and Kenneth Hayes Miller, and the uncompromisingly direct and very important Varnum Poore, and Henry Patrick Bruce, and Andrew Dasburg, and the clever artist-writer-

PORTRAIT, BY ALBERT BLOCH

thinker Guy Péne Dubois; and Stuart Davis, Bernard Karfiol, Guest Wickson, Charles Burchfield, Bertram Hartman, Pop Hart, the Zorachs, Boardman Robinson, and Rockwell Kent. Even then, there are authentic giants still unnamed: Karl Knaths, Raymond Jonson and Yasuo Kuniyoshi.

Well, the answer is that these men in the aggregate are so important, promise so fine a continuation of the modernist idea, that one simply cannot overlook them; but to do them justice would mean a book on American Expressionism alone.

If one could bring together with these the several Americans who

WASHINGTON BRIDGE,
BY PRESTON DICKINSON

are largely expatriates—Feininger from Germany, Pascin and Morgan Russell from Paris, Epstein, Kauffer and Anne Estelle Rice from London—and bring from Chicago and St. Louis and New Mexico and California some bits of Western strength and native boldness—why then . . . then . . . then what?

Well, well, one wonders. Perhaps the revelation of so much that is new and untrammeled and nakedly expressive would give the academicians that long overdue shock, they would drop dead

NEW MEXICO, BY MARSDEN HARTLEY

(as an Institution), and the radicals would have their galleries for a *real* show—and it would be such a show as would cheer the pioneers, because they would see that young America is alive, that there is a generation of art-seekers here, as in France and in Germany, who know that illustrative painting is dead, who love paint and color and give rein to their emotions. It would be an Event, because it would all be *living* art. And of course the Metropolitan Museum would come forth on that day, and buy another Davies out of the exhibition, to show that it is up-to-date.

By the "anatomy" of modern art I mean the structure of the several arts interdependently. To study contemporary painting alone is like dissecting a leg to discover what makes a man live and breathe. In critical accounts of the fine arts, and in journalism, painting stands for what is "Art" more than any other member—although music, the theatre and literature long have touched the general public more vitally. Architecture, which should be the mother art, without which painting and sculpture are derelicts, was out of the way of creativeness so long that it comes as a surprise to many to find it mentioned where art is concerned. But the hopeful thing about the present movement is that all the arts are concerned, architecture no less than painting, music no less than sculpture.

Painting, many centuries ago, took leadership among the visual arts. It is only natural, then, that painting should have experienced the real break into a new epoch. In becoming an independent and self-sufficient art, in divorcing itself from architecture, painting played some strange tricks. It left architecture with a coldness, a colorlessness, which still cramps and chills. It invaded the stage background, and gave an utterly untheatrical and pictorial quality to theatre art, an alien bias that has remained down to the present revolution. In taking the leadership it drew sculpture into many a false path—till even the brush-swing feeling was imitated in stone. Painting really isn't fit for leadership—nor will it have that leadership long if architects wake up to their present opportunities.

In dividing the balance of this book into chapters on architecture, sculpture and the theatre, I have no intention to suggest that the "new movement" in these arts is any more important or any more marked than in music or literature. But my scope was planned to cover only the visual arts. Besides, I confess freely that I am even more ignorant about music than about these others, and would not be led into saying more than that the same new freedom from

THREE JUGS, BY MAX WEBER

cramping traditions seems to have been won for the *Junge Kunst* composers, the same directness and fearlessness is evident in the treatment of "materials," a youthful, more intense spirit prevails. Intenseness—concentration—jazz! Well, that too has had its effect; but it is seen pretty clearly to be Dadaish and catchy. Real music goes deeper. Incidentally there is the same old cry from the academicians: "Ugliness! Discord! Bolshevism!" But new emotional beauties are brought to release.

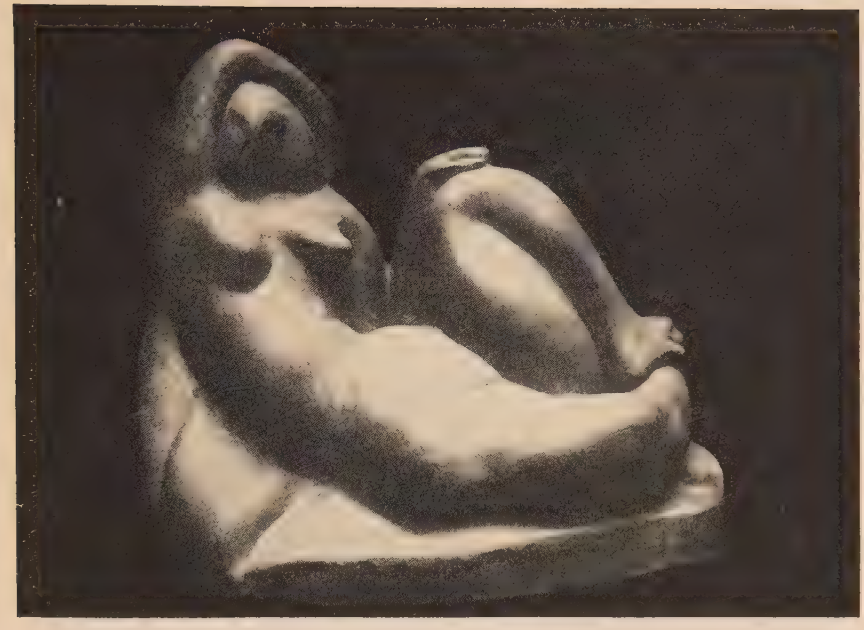
In literature, one finds the parallel in free verse, in the Imagist movement, in the breaking down of older forms in fiction. There are similar outlines and exactly parallel applications: the general swing away from realism, and the search for a form that will be typically of the materials, spoken words and idea-symbols; the attempt to banish "dead spots," the search for the intensified image, the grasping of slang, of tabooed words and ideas—anything for greater expressiveness.

If we were to chart the anatomy of the thing, not only would it show all these as major members, all growing vigorously, but there would be parts named for caricature, for etching and woodcutting (you really ought to see the inside of a German Expressionist print shop!), for the crafts, pottery-painting, poster design, book-making (*this* is *not* an example of Expressionist manufacture), textiles, what not? For this body is unified by a spirit.

PAINTED POTTERY,
BY VARNUM POOR

XIII

SCULPTURE: IMPRESSIONISM TO CUBISM



REPOSE, BY ARCHIPENKO

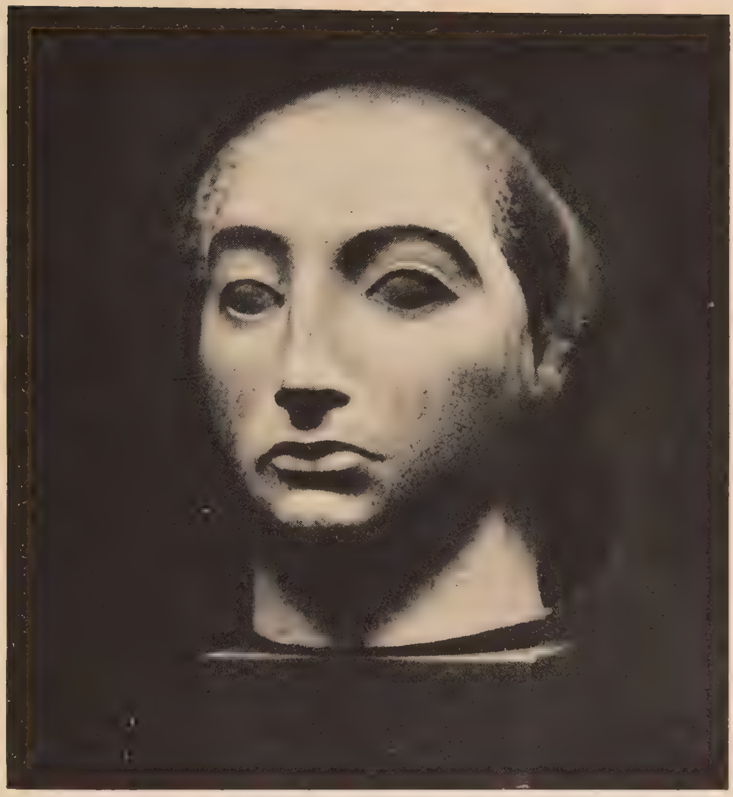
THIS, dear reader, is an example of modern sculpture. It is an extreme example. It is not like the statues you see at the Academy exhibitions. Nor is it like the be-au-tiful statues of the Greeks. It is not like many things in the Metropolitan Museum—although you may find hints of it in the sculpture of some very ancient peoples. You probably do not feel that it is pretty. The sculptor did not intend that it should be pretty.

The sculptor, nevertheless, had a very definite artistic purpose. He probably was not wholly successful. He may even have lapsed into a thing which may be called decadent modernness: a sort of flabbiness of the spirit, a rottening of the æsthetic perception. But this is not to be mistaken for the typical works of the decadents who are hypocritically vulgar, who practice a delicate sophisticated sort of perversion. It has a quality. The sculptor was seeking that thing which some of us believe to be the most essential quality of great sculpture, a thing which was largely lacking in Rodin and in St. Gaudens and in all the realistic-pictorial sculptors, which was totally lost by Carpeaux and by the Neo-Classicists before him and by the Baroque sculptors before them, and which can hardly be detected in Praxiteles or Donatello or Daniel Chester French. But it was in the Egyptians, in the works of certain Chinese periods, in the early Greeks, in Michael Angelo. And it is that which the modernist sculptors are after.

It corresponds to the quality that Cezanne sought beyond all else in painting, the quality so besought by the later Expressionists that they are willing to abandon all likeness to the surface look of nature and all refinement and prettiness of painted surface, if only they can achieve some slight revelation of it. In the field of sculpture it may best be described, perhaps, as *expressive sculptural form.*

Now it might seem that the things most talked about in connection with the modern painter's seeking for form—structure, volume and an extra dimension—would come readily to the sculptor's hand, simply because he works in three dimensions as against the two of painting. That is a shallow conception of sculptural form. It is the dimension beyond the obvious seeable ones, that counts most æsthetically, the unmeasurable dimension beyond the two of painting *or* the three of sculpture.

In its negative aspects, modernist sculpture corresponds closely



HEAD, BY GASTON LACHAISE

to modernist painting. The representative element is relegated to a wholly minor importance. If one is to enjoy these works at all, one must get freely back to the point of considering sculpture as sculpture, with a truth of its own, without a reservation that first it must imitate accurately and neatly some observed aspect of nature. Similarly "finish," both in the Victorian pretty sense, and in the sense of the Impressionist's obsession with the surface play of light, becomes merely an incidental issue. Show and flourish, in the

Rococo sense and as decoration (as in Beaux-Arts architecture) are absolutely disavowed. If these modern sculptors are successful, it will not be for the amazing life-likeness of their immediate predecessors, or for the pretty rounded "purity" of Thorwaldsen and Canova, or for ornament's sake. This typical uncompromising head by Gaston Lachaise is far from being either a pretty photograph or an inconsequential bit of decorativeness—is indeed the very opposite of "show" sculpture.

I am insisting on the sense of sculptural form as a basis for both creation and appreciation, because it seems to me perhaps easier to grasp than form in painting. When you do grasp it, dropping the "classical" notions which are fixed on us by our common-university and lecture-course educations, you will find new doors of æsthetic enjoyment opened to you, not only among the moderns but with the Chinese, the Mayans, the Egyptians and the Mycenæans.

I probably have a mind that is sculptural rather than painty. I do not get half so excited over the idea of creating paintings as I do over the thought that I might create in stone masses. When I think sculpture, I feel rock and mountains, space occupied and space around, voluminous balance of masses, serenity, repose. The figure by Archipenko, whatever may be its demerits, has something of the mountainous feeling. And there is silent rock quality in the Lachaise head.

Each separate art has its limitations and its essential values. It was no virtue in sculpture that it was able to become pictorial, even sketchy, through a considerable period. Its particular virtue lies in something not suited to picture-treatment, not fitted for illustration. Its materials, stone and metal, are hard, heavy, intractable.

Lightness of effect in the finished work is only a lying quality. Sculptural form—not the accidental form it takes from the natural aspect of its subject, but the essential thing—lies, as nearly as anyone has been able to put it, in related masses, in the repose of balanced volumes, in ordered volumes or masses vitalized by a living passion of the artist.

One might break up this problem and say that the volumes, the masses, depend upon the flow of planes, surfaces and slopes. That is merely transferring the idea to the dimensions which we can see. In the same way it is possible to say that the problem of sculpture is a problem of how light falls on a shaped mass or arranged planes: it is the light and shade that make the statue intelligible to us. True—but that is getting farther and farther away from the heart of the art. Rodin got lost in that maze, fell victim to his passion for light and shade—partly the rather squeaky light values of the contemporary Monet-Impressionist school of painters, and partly the organ-tone shadows of Rembrandt which he thought he could realize in stone. He largely saw sculpture by shadows, and therefore by lines creating deep shadows and by minute hollows varying shadows. But that is pictorial rather than sculptural conception. And Rodin will go into history as the unrivalled giant of the period when sculpture approached closest to pictorial art. *The Kiss* is typical of all the values to be achieved along that road, and of the lost sculptural repose and amplitude. But we will come back to Rodin, because he is important as marking the breaking point.

Some conventional sculptors, learning that lesson, have avoided deepcut shadows, have "kept the work white"—but merely that cannot make them modern. Others have practiced habitual simplification of natural forms, as if that were the gate to the lost region of creativeness. Of those others who jumped to geometrical equivalents for natural forms—the "surface" Cubists—I shall have more to say later. Of "distortion" in general, for emotional or formal intensification in sculpture, I can only repeat that the modernists don't much care how close to natural aspects you hold, or how far from nature you stray, so long as you put *expressiveness* into your work. Some of the finest art of the past has been heedless of visual accuracy; distortion really means nothing one way or the other on its own account; people will come to consider it an inessential again if the living sculptural-emotional form is there.

I grant you that it sometimes looks funny at first: such bulbous limbs, such attenuated torsos, a noseless head. But if you are really open-minded, not choked up with a lot of theories and irrelevant knowledge, you will not notice. You should have spent less time observing people on the bathing beach, and more with the seated Saite figures and the negro ritual masks. Your education has probably been too physical-cultural and photographic.

Of the history of sculptural art it is hardly necessary to say more than that there *have* been periods when form was more valued than imitation, directness of expression more than surface refinement. The primitive peoples link up as a rule. Greece began to slide into mere prettiness and imitativeness by the time of Phidias, although it would be a fanatical modernist who would rule out from the world's masterpieces the early vigorous works. Rome was first imitative, then productive of the most vulgarly realistic display in the history of the art. The Middle Ages produced some fine Expressionistic things, and the Romanesque period is full of sculp-

THE KISS, BY RODIN

ture that is perfectly a part of an expressive architectural whole. The high Gothic and late Gothic lapsed to weak representation. A vigorous Michael Angelo stands out vividly, escaping the general prettifying and intellectualizing of the Renaissance. Followed the Baroque and Rococo, then the Neo-Classic, both far from the essential thing. Then came what the histories term "modern sculpture."

Realism overspreads the world. Some sculptors are more individualistic, others are eclectic. Some are robust, others are light and sentimental. But all are true to their new-found faith in *observation.* Rude varies the formula melodramatically. Carpeaux apotheosizes "show." Hildebrand gives an intellectualist's reasonableness to modern life in Greek dress. St. Gaudens puts a plausible nobility into our American monuments—in place of the insipid chemised ladies and hideous frock-coated gentlemen of an earlier day. Sculpture has come to its highest point in pictorial fluency, monumental illustration. Even so frankly pictorial a monument as the Shaw Memorial is endowed with noble composition and an architectural completeness—but it is not typically sculptural.

At this point let us take note of certain facts: the sculptor had in general given up cutting his own stone—he was a modeller, and skilled workmen translated his "design" to stone or bronze. The sculptor thus had no reason to conceive with that sort of sculptural emotion that rises from a passion for his materials; and combined with this, he had learned to rely more upon observation of nature than upon any subjective emotion of his own. He had in general a vague idea of combining Greek finish with modern scientific observation of life. He was mimetic, a clever portraitist, and estimable as an upholder of patriotism and the capitalistic state through the easy fluency of his show monuments. But something of eternal art was passing him by.

The final phase of the era of realism developed in the last quarter of the 19th Century. Even in sculpture it may conveniently be called Impressionism, although the term needs some further elucidation when used in this connection. As a matter of fact Impressionism, implying a certain sketchiness, is almost an impossibility in true sculpture, i.e., cut stone; but in what currently passed for that art, in modelling, Impressionism made itself fairly plausible and popular—and indeed is still the end and substance of four-fifths of the works of our facile exhibition modellers of today.

Auguste Rodin touched the peak of purely naturalistic sculpture, then gathered to himself all of the glory and the blame that the world was ready to bestow on Impressionism in sculpture, and finally started on a too-long-deferred search for a new form.

This giant, this great outstanding figure of the last half of the 19th Century, might alone serve as a foil against which to make clear the development of the "newer sculpture." There will be many to cry out against this blasphemy, to say that Rodin was greater than any who has come since. But his greatness is only the greatness of an amazing naturalism at first, and then of Impressionism. It has qualities more insinuating than anything in Manet or Monet. It has sweet surface appeal, and associative appeal of subject, and a cunning trick of half-concealment, of implied mysticism and possible profoundness. But it lacks one great essential element of sculpture.

Of Rodin's early naturalistic work—itself a revolt against the showy qualities of Carpeaux and the contemporary French school—it is hardly necessary to do more than mention *The Age of Bronze* and *John the Baptist*, which are widely known through replicas in many museums and through repeated illustration in books and periodicals. The quality of these is made clear by the incident which occurred when *The Age of Bronze* was first exhibited at the Salon of 1877. This single poised figure was so exactly and minutely modeled that the sculptor was accused of an imposition.

Fellow artists declared that to obtain such fidelity he must have taken casts from life. In order to disprove the charge, Rodin was obliged to take casts from parts of his original model, and show how they differed from his statue. Realism triumphant, in its illusion of nature, and its slight variance from nature!

Rodin lived through the entire fight waged by the Impressionist painters, and it would be idle to suppose that he failed to test his own art by their discoveries. When one studies his sculpture with the works of the Impressionist painters—say, Monet and Pissarro—in mind, certain parallels become clear.

One is in the matter of *pose.* The Impressionist painters sought above all else to record a single fleeting *aspect* of a scene, often having to sacrifice structure and other qualities to the catching of this "impression." Rodin employed models to walk nude about his studio so that he could catch them unexpectedly in sudden revealing attitudes, and he would fix those in clay. There, certainly, is the parallel of the painted "aspect."

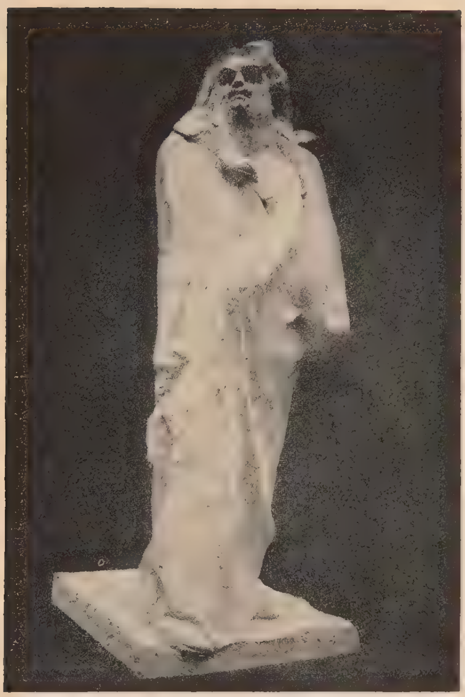
There is, too, a sculptural counterpart of Monet's achievement of vibration-of-light. If he laid on his pigments in a way to catch the light more brilliantly than any predecessor, Rodin may be said to have made sculpture more luminous than any before his time. He kept the larger masses of his pieces—I am thinking of the long line of works like *The Danaid, The Kiss, The Eternal Idol* and *Satyr and Nymph*—open and uninvolved, with full surfaces toward the light; and he varied these surfaces with bosses and hollows so minute (though natural) that there is a constant subtle play of half-obscure dark-and-light. The effect is spontaneous and sweetly flowing to a degree unknown in the history of sculpture. It is

THE DANCER, BY GEORG KOLBE

realism made atmospheric, the "lightness" of painted Impressionism grafted on to the heaviest of mediums.

These painters, too, made a point of fading off their pictures at the edges, and Rodin creates a not dissimilar effect by failing to work his figures entirely out of the marble block. The ground is purposely thrown out of focus to make the statue stand out the more clearly by contrast. This method, which must be looked upon as something of an affectation, increases the sense of concentration, and occasionally it helps to preserve that essentially sculptural feeling of massiveness which the Impressionist method is in general bound to destroy. This, then, is the great Impressionist, his the type of sculpture against which a revolt was inevitable when a new generation came thinking new thoughts and dreaming new sculptural dreams. For despite his escape from the prettily rounded limbs and the sweet, smooth surfaces of an earlier school, and despite his avoidance of the typical Beaux-Arts flourish, Rodin was not modern in the post-Realistic sense. His surfaces were lively with variation, his restrained masses confined powerful movement, his figures achieved a certain sense of life; but he missed the massive architectonic feeling of later work, his "movement" was not of Cezanne's voluminous sort, his sense of life not that living *sculptural form* of Lachaise and Gill. Despite his concentration and his affectation of the broken block and spontaneous creation—which some commentators have confounded with the directness and divine heedlessness of the real moderns—he remained the inspired sensitive naturalist. Meier-Graefe put it in a few words: "His magic breathes Nature, that is its strength. There is not a single detail in his work which is not the outcome of a natural impression."

Rodin bred a whole school of sculptors with Impressionistic traits, but none has ever succeeded in reaching his perfection of rippling surface texture and absolute faithfulness of pose. Most of his followers have unconsciously been more honest than he in that they recorded their impressions in clay rather than marble. Some of these followers carried the method to the absurd extreme of sketchiness and dim outline: notably Medardo Rosso with his soft-focus photographic Impressionism, and Bistolfi with his pretti-



BALZAC, BY RODIN

fied and painty figures which exact spontaneity at whatever cost to sculptural solidity. Other followers glorified Rodin's subtle bosses and hollows into an intensely disagreeable sort of bulgy realism which supposedly substitutes "power" for repose. But these were only tag ends of decadent realism, and it is from Rodin's work that I have chosen two of my illustrations of Impressionism. One is *The Kiss*, because it illustrates as well as anything of the period the best qualities of Impressionism in sculpture. The other is that famous sketch for a Balzac monument wherein Rodin went beyond his own previous limitations, and arrived at a summary treatment of nature which led many a critic to align him with the ultra-moderns. But it is to be noted that this is only a partial surrender to sculptural emotion: the idea is realistic, and realism somehow breathes from the statue.

A third illustration added for contrast to post-Impressionism is George Kolbe's *Dancer*, an example of the eclectic sort of art practiced by a wise group of contemporary sculptors, gaining in surface and pose from Rodin, but clever enough to avoid any effort to imitate his highly individual method of realistic concentration. A remarkably graceful and seductive bit of sculptural illustration it is—and by a man who has since forsaken illustration to do notable things in starkly simple composition.

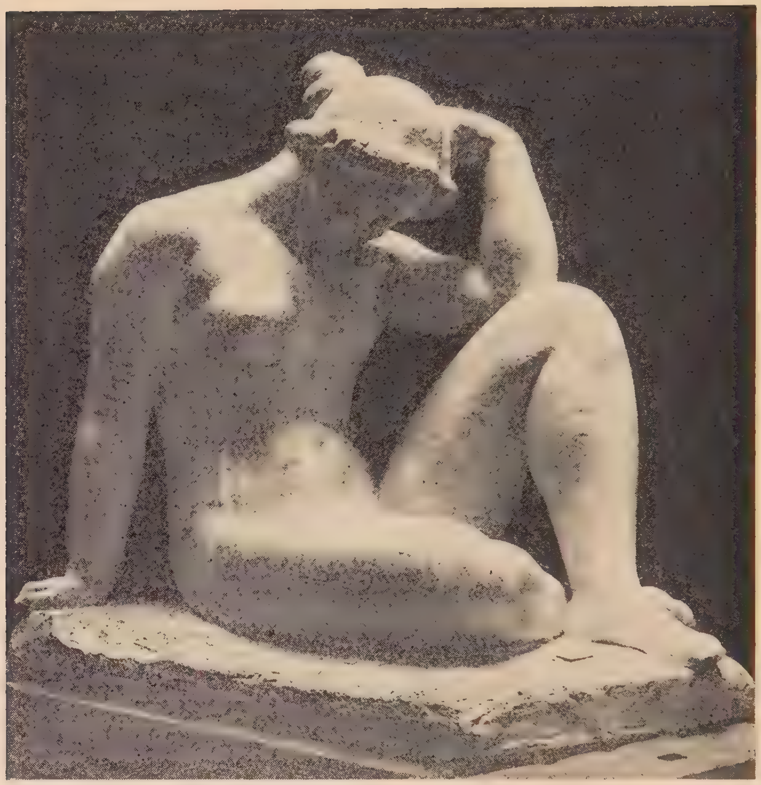
There was no Cezanne in sculpture. No one artist marks the sudden break from Rodin into the slope called post-Impressionistic. There was, in between, a time which I can only call "the honest period." It was like architecture in this, the really modern architects having arrived at new forms not directly as a recoil from the eclectic, imitative period, but out of a period of new respect for engineering and common-sense *building*. Just so a few sculptors returned quietly to the basic principles of sculpture.

First they inquired what was the essential quality suggested or determined by the heavy and plastic materials in which they must work—and they arrived at a certain massiveness. Second, they inquired whether the pictorial values developed under Impressionism, the straining for revealing pose and sketchy finish, were essentially sculptural—and they escaped from the burden of pictorial and literary inessentials. And third, they conceived, instinctively rather than consciously, that there is something that can be called essential sculptural form. They quite clearly found joy in seeking this sort of form—but still within the limits of normal aspects—seen honestly.

Several names might enter into the story here, if this book were altogether dedicated to sculpture: Anton Hanak, Austria's greatest sculptor; Jan Stursa, and that Jane Poupelet who is happily just coming into the height of her powers. But the period is perfectly summarized in the work of Aristide Maillol. Of him Meier-Graefe wrote nearly twenty years ago: "Maillol is perhaps the first Frenchman since the Gothic artists who shows no traces of the Baroque." There was something prophetic in the words, and certainly it was a good beginning; no trace of flourish, of sophisticated stylism, of show elements. After that, absolute freedom from any desire to be descriptive, to show a figure in a discovered or arranged pose; and no over-exaltation of finish. Here was a return to fundamentals.

Maillol is direct where Rodin is ingenious, simple in spirit where Rodin achieves simplicity of effect out of a marvelous actual complexity. Maillol is little interested in either violent movement or the tense quivering figure. The posed ecstatic moment of Rodin, the peculiarities of pose and gesture avidly sought by the Impressionists—these would disturb the repose and serenity of his sculptured figures. He equally disavows any desire to compete with the *littérateurs* in clay or the illustrators. His thought and mode are based on a conception of sculpture as a massive, quiet art.

Maillol is debtor to Rodin in one matter, in that the latter brought a new seriousness to the study of surface. But the newer man shapes it for vigor and for the sake of the broader mass.



SEATED FIGURE,
BY ARISTIDE MAILLOL

instead of breaking it up for atmospheric play of light. That sweetly flowing quality of Rodin's marble, the shimmer of minute variations of surface, which one never ceases to wonder at, would be no gain to Maillol's art of simple contours and balanced volumes. The fine amplitude of his work could only be disturbed by Impressionistic "lightness."

Here then in the negative sense, at least, is true post-Impressionist sculpture. It has cut behind all the falsities of pictorial conception which characterized the art from the Renaissance to Rodin. Sculpture has become again a thing in itself, not a means of imitating a thing seen. It conveys emotion rather than a thought or aspect. It has character of its own rather than the character of a model. It preserves the life of the material in which the artist worked. It is the negation of Realism.

I am ready to grant that Maillol's work is post-Impressionistic chiefly in the negative sense of being a return. If one is thinking of the out-and-out modernists, the distortionists and the Expressionists, it is necessary to make distinctions and reservations here. The bulk of the modernists have gone beyond merely a returned honesty, directness and simplicity. Those later men frankly abandon fidelity to natural form if thereby they can hope to intensify emotion or sculptural feeling. Maillol, in spite of all his contempt for realistic interest, never violates the accepted visual aspects of nature. He simplifies, summarizes and selects, but he keeps discreetly within observed natural normality. He returns to honest structural principles and a plastic substantiality, and one feels that there is a mathematical basis beyond; but he never attempts to "cube" the outward aspect, never distorts the figure to gain intensity. If he achieves a fourth dimension, he always does it after arranging the other three in natural order. He goes half the way with the moderns: he seeks form, but he sacrifices no broad visual truth to intensify it.

Here then is a giant of his own time. His is an achievement which will not interest readers the less for being not quite so modern, in the sense of increased intensification through distortion, as is Archipenko's or Lehmbruck's. It is to be added that no artist of the later era has achieved in his own time a success quite as complete as Maillol's in his between-times period. Even the most exclusive of the later moderns grants him æsthetic validity. He won his half of the fight superbly. The *Seated Figure* shown here exhibits a *completeness* that to some of us is more satisfying than anything ever done by an Impressionist or other realist. It lives in its own right, without any necessity of associative interest of subject or symbolism. The architectural panel (page 308) is no less remarkable for the quality of fullness, completeness. The illustration of *A Woman Standing* is added here because it so typically belongs to the chapter in sculptural history which lies between Rodin and Lehmbruck or Gill.

Before going on to the extremer modernists, however, it is necessary to say a word about the return to honesty in relation to the question of the archaic, and particularly about naïveté. Maillol in going back to something solidly structural, exhibits a massiveness and sheerness that have led to talk of primitive influences. He doubtless learned to value something finely heavy by a study of archaic works, but he has not returned to archaic conventions. His simplicity is elemental but by no means primitive. Particularly he lacks the naïve touch. Naïveté implies a child-like quality: the vision and directness of the child who will draw a cat and a house of the same size, or a green cow, and see no absurdity in it. It would be well if we could all understand intuitively that such violations of accidentals in Nature are inconsequential. But Maillol never asks us to overlook a distortion. Even educated people—provided they have not been trained so dry that they look for illustration and illusion above all else—can enjoy his statues. It remained for a later group to cultivate the naïve approach.

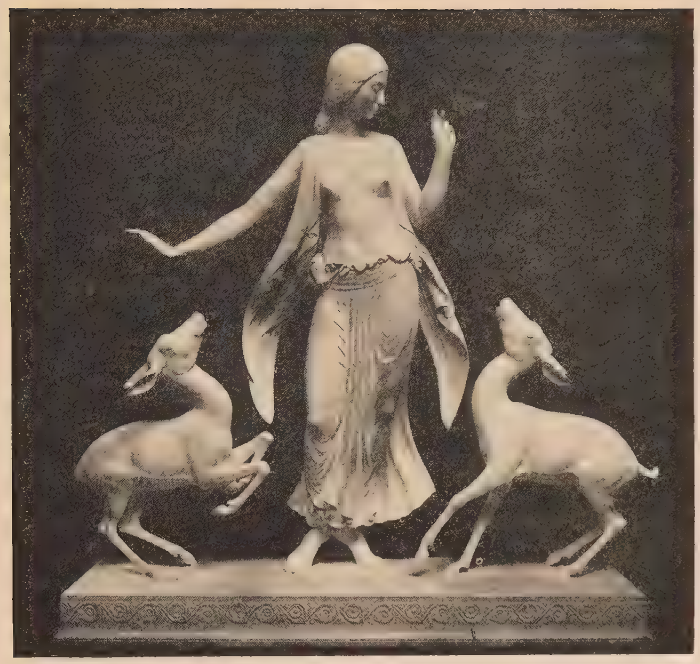
A WOMAN STANDING,
BY ARISTIDE MAILLOL

Certain types of archaic conventionalization have become a pretty trick with many sculptors. A little while back there was much discussion of "formalization" as a desirable quality. This is not to be confused with the search for "form" which plays so large a part in modernist art. It is rather a surface quality, a handling in conformance with explicit conventions: like the "archaic smile" or Greek formalization of the hair.

As a post-Impressionist phase, in time, formalized sculpture cannot be overlooked, and it may be exceedingly graceful and agreeable. It belongs, nevertheless, outside that slope of sculpture which parallels the Cezanne-Expressionist slope in painting. It is not without its backing of critical opinion, that would label it the truly modern development; and its chief practitioner in America, Paul Manship, has been heralded widely as the most promising and most talented of the new generation of native sculptors.

Nothing could be more graceful and pleasing within the limitations adopted by the artist than this *Dancer and Gazelles,* and nothing could be more typical of the movement as a whole. Manship has had periods of Greek formalization, Oriental formalization, and Italian Renaissance formalization, each easily recognized. That very versatility is an indication of the shallow rather than profound influences to which the formalizing sculptors have subjected themselves. They hold to certain rigidities and simplifications because those things produce agreeable effects. It is a sort of decorative conventionalization, a clever bit of craftsmanship in finishing, which has little to do with the soul of sculpture. Manship's work is almost invariably charming, delicate and in perfect taste, but it has little emotion and certainly no sculptural passion (I use the term thoughtfully). It is perhaps perfect decorative illustration—and that is a deal better than perfect transcriptive illustration.

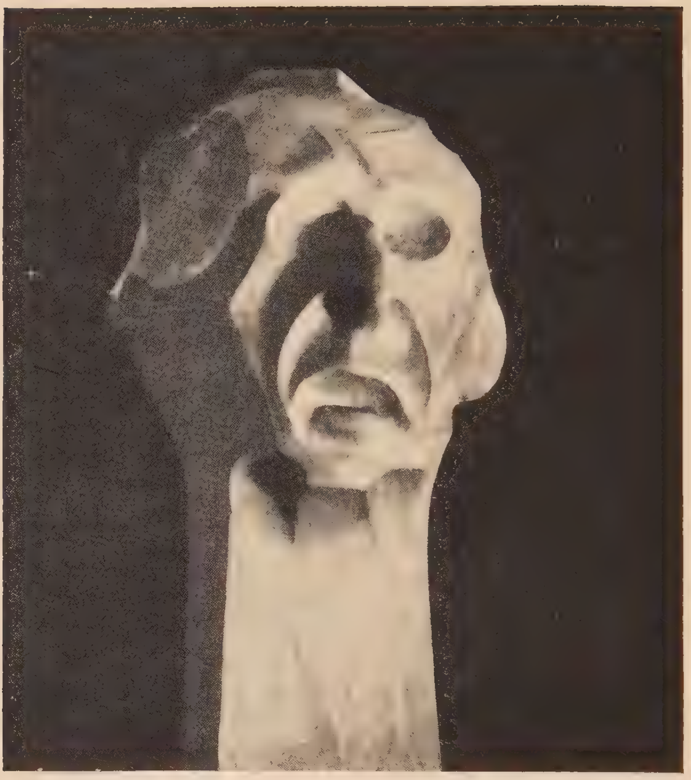
One might follow this lead to treat of the work of the Servian Mestrovic, who applies a sort of formalization to brutally heavy



DANCER AND GAZELLES, BY PAUL MANSHIP

subjects; or of Hunt Diederich, who more than any other American designs with that sure decorative touch and stylistic appeal which we have noted as characteristic of Viennese art; or of the French Bourdelle, who is really very important, although only recently has he escaped from the realistic Rodin influence, to begin formalizing with a fine architectural feeling—and occasionally to get over into the field of form-seeking.

But what of Cubism and sculpture? At superficial glance it would seem that the Cubist method would apply to glyptic or plastic art as an immediate aid to the securing of essential massiveness



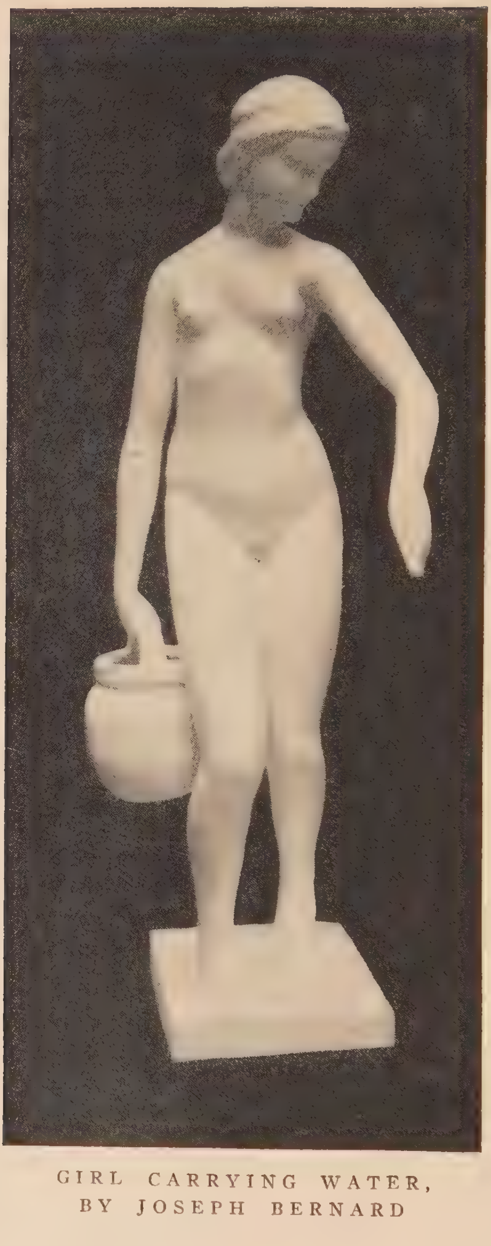
HEAD OF RUDOLF BLUEMNER,
BY WILLIAM WAUER

and simplification. Hardly so simple. Cubism as applied to painting was designed to develop another dimension, was a means to achieving synthesis. To use cubism in simply the ordinary geometrical sense in sculpture would mean nothing comparable because that art is already three-dimensional—and thus literally cubic. An application of the doctrine in spirit would mean seeking a further dimension. It has, indeed, proved its value only when it turned the attention of the sculptors to the revelation of a conceived "form"—to a seeking for ordered volumes and balanced masses in new sorts of expressive relationships.

Most so-called Cubist sculpture has been only the old sculpture with the planes flattened out—the application in letter rather than spirit. Important people like Archipenko and Scharff and Jan Stursa went through Cubist "periods" and doubtless emerged with an enriched equipment, with a deeper sense of the structural thing that underlies life and art.

The man who has made most out of the technical peculiarities of Cubism is William Wauer, whose head of Rudolf Bluemner is shown on the page opposite. One feels that here is a thing that gains vigor and a certain suavity by the simplifying of planes and the accentuation of angles separating planes. Despite the well-realized structure of the head, however, it is hardly to be counted great sculpture. Its arresting qualities are, in the last analysis, representative and technical. It smacks a little of merely giving natural forms a simplified geometrical equivalent.

Somewhat more serious consideration should be given, perhaps, to Teidors Zalkaln's *Scriabin.* In it (page 44) the flattening of planes is accomplished with more sculptural feeling, and there is evidence of creative seeking in the relationship of the broader masses or blocks. If one were able to draw a line between realism and Expressionism in sculpture, one might find it illuminating to study out just how close Rodin's *Balzac* comes to the line, but within the realistic territory, and how close this *Scriabin* is to the line, but on the "seeking for form" side. I leave it to the reader to ponder this if he is interested. Meantime the Bolsheviki have set

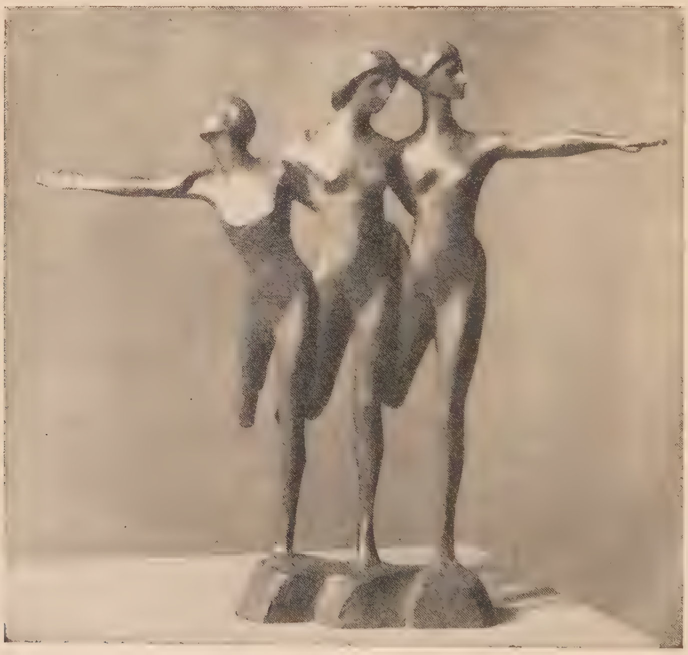


GIRL CARRYING WATER,
BY JOSEPH BERNARD

up the *Scriabin* in stone in a Leningrad square, while *Balzac*, refused by an indignant Bourgeoisie in France, is relegated to a corner of the Rodin Museum. In this case modernism seems to have moved in accord on its artistic and political fronts.

There is no reason why the sculptor who considers his art primarily a question of related volumes and masses should not conceive those masses elementally as cubes. But flattening down natural forms to a summary statement is not enough. If the statue is based on something seen in a model—is at least incidentally representative—the blocking down demands not only simplification of planes but a synthesis of planes and volumes, a synthesis of observed forms and *conceived* forms. So far that synthesis has carried the more important sculptors in a direction where obviously Cubistic traits are seldom noticeable. At any rate Archipenko, Lehmbruck, Gaudier, Lachaise and many of the other significant ones are better explained by a non-technical phrase like "Expressionism."

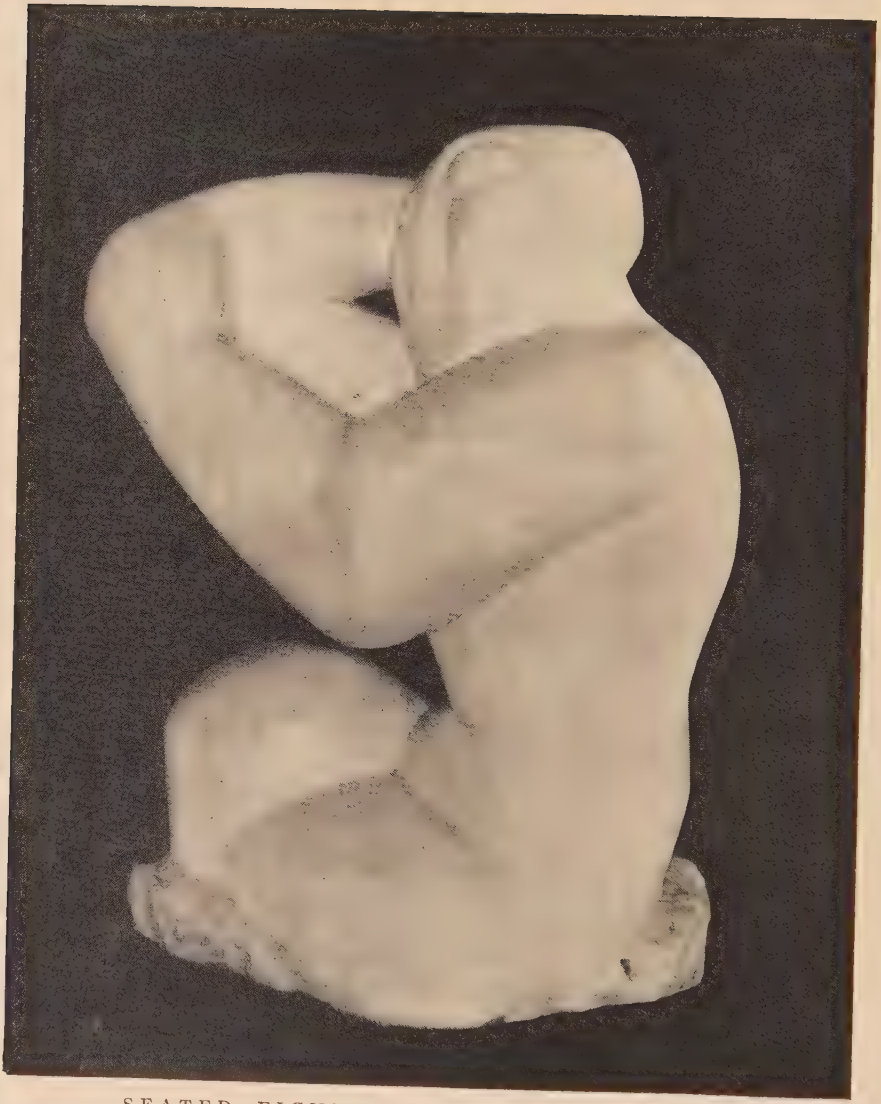
Before turning, however, to the true Expressionist sculptors—the subject of the next chapter—before taking up the implications of expressiveness of personal emotion and of heavy sculptural materials, it is well to list some other sculptors who are post-Expressionistic in time but obviously the spiritual (or intellectual) fellow-artists of Degas and Renoir and Laurencin, rather than of Cezanne and Picasso and Kokoschka. There is that other Frenchman, Joseph Bernard, who returns to a sweet simplicity and a disarming child-like directness of statement, as illustrated so prettily in this *Girl Carrying Water*. Besides Mestrovic, from the Balkans, and exhibiting something of the same archaism and vigorous formalization, is Rosandic. In Germany are to be seen in many collections the small bronzes and terra cottas of Renée Sintenis, with a pretty understanding of the appeal of young animals: far preferable to those laboriously studied animals of Barye, so prized by an earlier generation. A graceful synthesis has been found, too, by the American Mowbray-Clarke, who never quite got over into the field of the essentially sculptural Expressionists, into profound ordering of sculptural volumes to express a sculptural emotion; though he always escapes the dull literalness of most illustrative sculpture. I leave you with his rather light expression of an emotion of three graceful ladies: an instructive example of sculpture after Impressionism, but quite far from forthright Expressionism—as you may see by contrasting this with the next illustration.



THREE FREE, BY JOHN MOWBRAY-CLARKE

XIV

SCULPTURE: EXPRESSIONISM



SEATED FIGURE, BY GAUDIER-BRZESKA

EXPRESSIONISM, as we have seen, is a term which implies no technical formula, no codified laws of subject or treatment. It is broad enough to include the experimenters in absolute abstraction, like Kandinsky, and those who seek instinctively to liberate form through and beyond reality, like Kokoschka and Marin. It is a label with as little doctrinaire implication as any that can be applied to a "movement" in art. It suggests, in baldest explanation, only that the artist has shifted from preoccupation with correct representation to a search for something in the nature of æsthetic intensification or expressive form.

It is only by some such untechnical and inclusive word that one can group the bulk of the post-Impressionist sculptors. It has been suggested already how some of them went through a period of utilizing Cubism merely as a diverting mask for representation, and how some achieved a certain sculptural blockiness and weightiness in their flattening of planes and their seeking of a new dimension in mass relationship. These latter touched over into Expressionism—and perhaps the *heaviness* of their work is the first obvious indication. An Expressionist thinks heavy, if I may so put it, when he thinks sculpture. Part of his substitution for subject interest is the inherent virtue of his medium—in this case, of stone cutting. That virtue is as a rule expressive in massive volumes in relation.

Because primitive peoples think more honestly in regard to materials than civilized and sophisticated folk—who come to value cleverness in imitating one material in another—primitive sculpture, whether pre-Greek, Egyptian, or Chinese, is usually solid, heavy, simple. It is for this reason that one so often sees the Expressionist's achievement of a typical sculptural massiveness heralded as a return to the primitives. If achieved honestly, it is not a return at all, but an arrival at the same goal through a similar understanding of the qualities of stone.

Coupled with this respect for materials—nay, love of materials—is the modernist's directness of conception. His work is instinctively created, not reasoned or arranged in accordance with principles intellectually coded. Too much reasoning, inevitably involving a selective mode of working, leads to the addition of all sorts of adventitious trappings to a work of art, leads to high polish, symbols, and general prettiness. Emotional subjectivity is what counts, not intellectual.

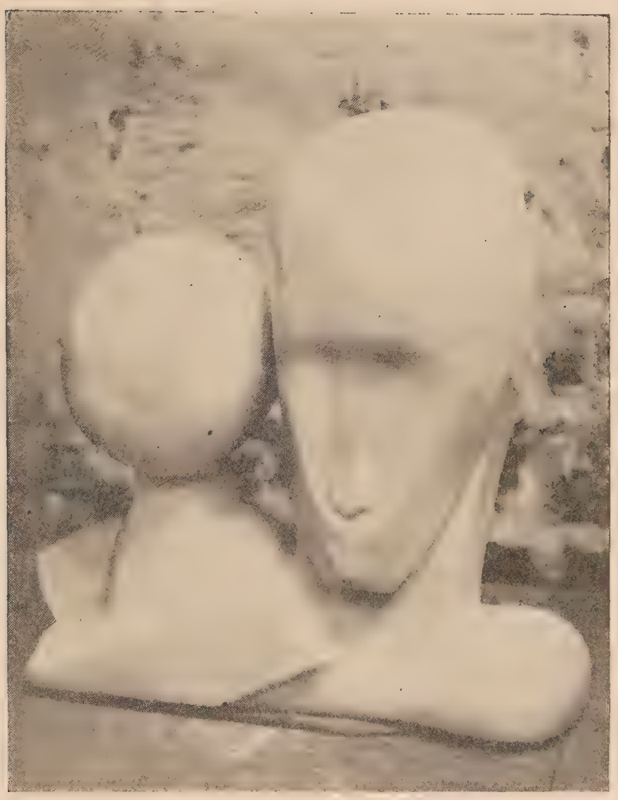
Gaudier, or Gaudier-Brzeska, not a primitive in the imitational sense, was perhaps the best example of a sculptor who conceived with uncivilized directness, in both life and art. With a passion for stone and metal, he always reflected the virtues of these respective media in the finished work. He got closer to the heart of sculptural æsthetics, too, than any other artist whose statements I have been able to find. Note how much is summed up in these three short sentences:

"Sculptural energy is the mountain.

"Sculptural feeling is the appreciation of masses in relation.

"Sculptural ability is the defining of these masses by planes."

Gaudier, writing from the trenches, told of "pinching" a German rifle in a raid, and how he carved a "gentler order of feeling"



MOTHER AND CHILD, BY JACOB EPSTEIN

out of the brutal "image" of the rifle-butt. That presumably was his last work of art. He would have appreciated the huge irony of his taking-off, by means of another German rifle that he failed to pinch—this naïve-minded, direct-thinking, hugely-creative, gentle modern savage, utterly contemptuous of civilization, and then killed at twenty-four in civilization's most civilized war.

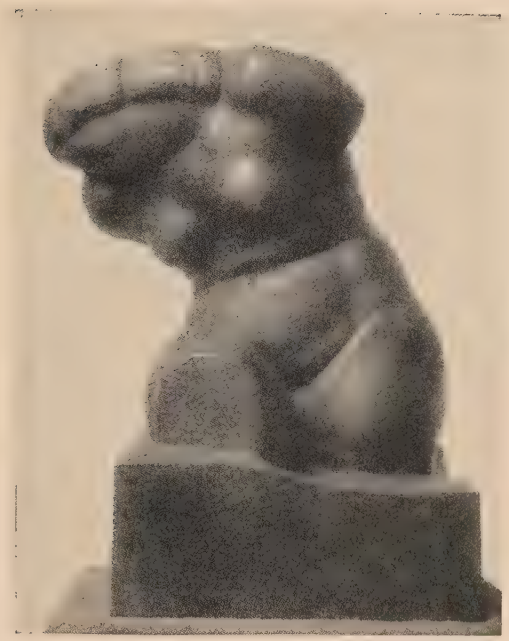
His own statement about the matter of reason and instinct, from a letter to *The Egoist* (quoted with all his other fugitive writings in Ezra Pound's book, *Gaudier-Brzeska*), also touches profoundly on points pertinent to all the moderns:

"The archaic works discovered at Gnossos are the expressions of what is termed a barbaric people—i.e., a people to whom reason is secondary to instinct. The pretty works of the great Hellenes are the productions of a civilized—i.e., a people to whom instinct is secondary to reason. . . .

"The modern sculptor is a man who works with instinct as his inspiring force. His work is emotional. The shape of a leg, or the curve of an eyebrow, etc., etc., have to him no significance whatever; light voluptuous modelling is to him insipid—what he feels he does so intensely and his work is nothing more nor less than the abstraction of this intense feeling. . . . That this sculpture has no relation to classic Greek, but that it is continuing the tradition of the barbaric peoples of the earth (for whom we have sympathy and admiration) I hope to have made clear."

But he cut statues *as* the archaic peoples did, not in weakened imitation of them. In his *Seated Figure* there is evident more of conscious "appreciation of masses in relation" than any true primitive is likely to have felt. But it is the absolute negation of "the pretty works of the great Hellenes"—whom he more feelingly terms elsewhere "those damned Greeks."

Pound comments on Gaudier's peculiar "soft bluntness," which excellently characterizes a certain pervading quality of modern archaic-like work. It a little misses the austerity and rigidity of much early Egyptian and Chinese sculpture—a difference covered by the word "soft." But it all, even when the bluntness is as rounded and restrained as Franz Metzner's, is innocent of the over-



FIGURE, BY FRANZ METZNER

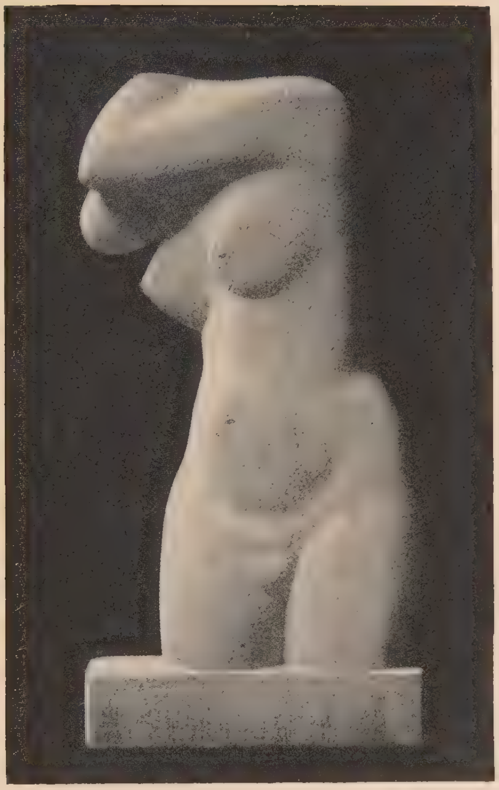
refinement, both of mass and of surface, characteristic of the more meticulous finishers, the Victorian modellers.

Metzner was the most discussed modern sculptor of Germany a decade ago; but today a good deal of his modernness seems a bit strained: realistic subjects formalized into massiveness, the heaviness obtained largely by a trick of conventionalization. And yet it achieves a degree of purely sculptural feeling long absent before his time. And he has had incalculable influence on the younger generation of European sculptors.

The living embodiment of the primitive "feeling for stone" is to be seen in Eric Gill. He advocates (with absolute justice) that the name "sculptor" be denied to any man who does not cut his own stone. Gill insists too that the work of art is its own justification, that it should be conceived in that way and not as an imitation of the appearance of something else, or as a work which "conveys a criticism or an appreciation." He has written a pamphlet about his art which sums up neatly several other modern principles: "The study of nature is *not* a prime necessity, though the love of nature may be such." And: "The proper carving of stone results, and should so result, in a certain roundness and solidity of form with no detachment of parts."

Again, as with Gaudier, it is instinct (love), non-representation, solidity of form. But most of all, with Gill, it is the feeling for stone, the evocation of some fourth-dimensional virtue that lies in the quality of his material. Could anything be more rock-like than this *Torso?* Of course if one has been educated almost exclusively to the look of rounded plaster casts of Greek and Roman statues, and to our polite eclectic sculptors (as most of us Americans have), it takes time to become accustomed to the rock look—but that is where the soul of sculpture lives. It is the more surprising to find the quality so finely exemplified in the work of a British artist, because a passionate respect for the virtues and limitations of the medium is the last thing evident in British art as a whole; and before Gill the country had hardly known a trace of true sculptural emotion.

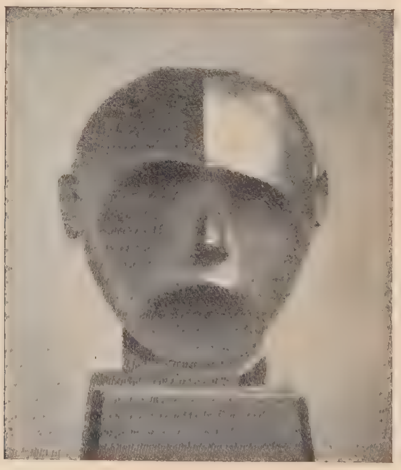
A fad for negro sculpture developed some years ago, and its effects are apparent in the work of some really important artists. The French Post-Impressionists first became excited over these "barbaric" carvings in wood, delighting in the directness of expression,



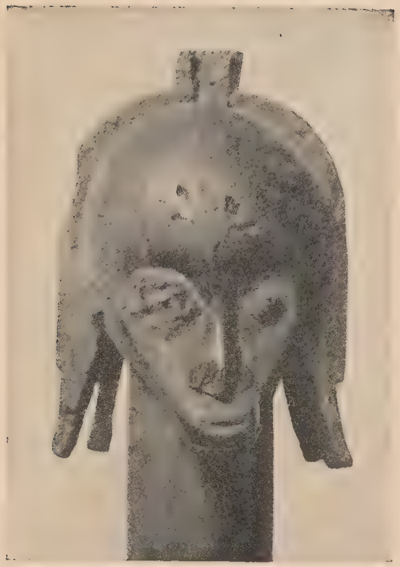
TORSO, BY ERIC GILL

the impersonality, and the naïveté of them. More recently the influence has been rampant in Germany. There has been a considerable amount of loose rhapsodizing about this form of primitiveness, which is in itself important up to a certain point, but usually lacking in some of the elemental and profound values inherent in certain archaic art periods.

Negro sculpture is a healthful field of study for the average white sculptor because it is likely to give pause to his conceit, his self-conscious show of virtuosity, his tendency toward over-refinement and flourish. These little idols, fetishes and masks are direct expressions of religious emotion and altogether impersonal. The sculptor approaches his work in humility, always feeling that he is less important than the figure he is carving. He has no eye on an ultimate "educated" spectator. His carving is for itself, out of his emotion. Is it any wonder that the European modernists, rebelling from a current mode of art characterized by cleverness and "show" above all else, should have hailed ecstatically such simple expressive beauty? Let one add, too, that negro art is formalized to the last degree, is innocent of any taint of naturalism—and it is easy to understand why Matisse, Picasso and the other *fauves*, and after them the German Expressionists, elevated these simple works to the level of their gods out of Egypt, China and archaic Greece.



NEGRO SCULPTURE



NEGRO SCULPTURE

And now, when the claim of negro sculpture is being examined a little more dispassionately, even the most level-headed critic, if he has any glimmering of what modern art is after, must recognize that these things are of more import than, for example, the art of the Roman era. (Consider carefully before you answer back, dear reader.)

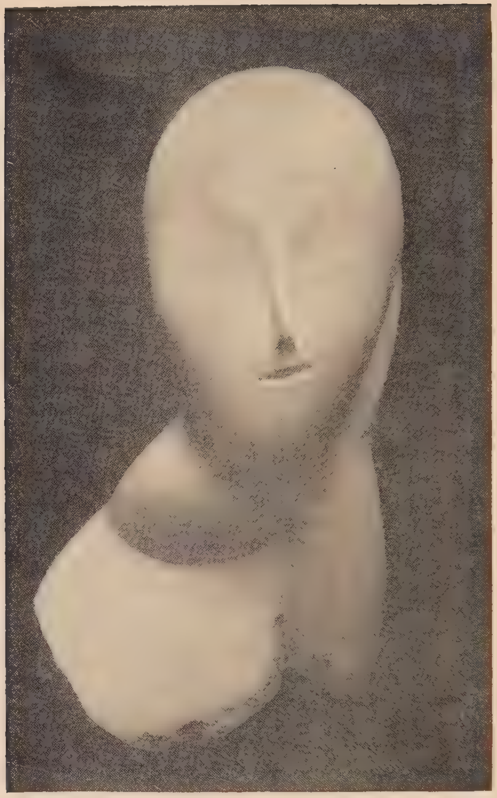
To summarize the relationship of negro sculpture to modernist sculpture, I cannot do better than quote a paragraph written by Ladislas Medgyes: "All the peculiarities which were considered essential in the form language of negro sculpture are developed with the greatest intensity in the masks. The constructive beauty of the human face is retained as a basis, but freed from all sensualism. The eyes are more than human eyes; like deep lakes or triumphal arches, they are almost geometrical, and still full of the greatest intensity of life. The nose as central axis plays an important part in the composition, and is generally well developed as a high relief or deep incision. The free form-language can change the plus of a dimension into a minus and even increase the harmony of the composition thereby. . . . It is the rhythm of forms that determines this playing with positive and negative depth, and not the natural aspect of the object portrayed or suggested. . . . In spite of the strong deformation of visual aspect, the natural form remains the basis of creation, raised to such a high degree of concentration and objectivity that it becomes an independent, new being—a work of art."

Certain artists have so frankly copied or derived from the peculiarities of negro carved figures that there is no escaping the connection. Some are primarily painters, like Karl Schmidt-Rottluff who has found occasional outlet for his gigantic primitive talent in wood sculpture; others, like Rudolf Belling and Emi Roeder had periods that showed the influence. Even so important an artist as Bernhard Hoetger seems in his most recent work to be attempting barbaric simplification tinged with negro conventions. But somehow the men who—whether the influence is negro or Egyptian or Hindu, or all these and more—synthesize all influences into something of their own, are the ones who measure largest creatively in terms of today.

Gaudier, a sculptor who must have seen, appreciated and appraised negro carved figures, arrived, in his *Seated Figure*, at a simplicity and an impersonality comparable to that of his African fellows, but without exhibiting any signs of indebtedness. The fact that their work is less massive is partly due to the difference in material, but there is some other elemental quality here too—explainable by the fact that civilization, while leading us into many paths that are dubious æsthetically, has also enriched the vision of the artist who has remained unspoiled.

Abstraction in sculpture. Gaudier again, going as near to abstraction as the negroes, wrote somewhere that his experiments had made him believe that absolute abstraction was more suited to painting than to sculpture. He advanced two reasons: first, that the achievement of abstract beauty in a work of art usually involves a considerable complexity of forms, which could be encompassed in a painting but would be prejudicial to the fundamental simple sculptural feeling; and second, that while painting has yet to explore almost the entire field of inorganic form, the sculptor has been anticipated by the designers of modern machinery. Gaudier seems to have given up the attempt to compass pure abstractions after doing a few inorganic "toys." And those other sculptors who come nearest to abstract form seem to rely strongly upon some such (usually) incidental element as surface sensuousness or linear rhythm.

Thus if I were pressed for an explanation of the attraction which Brancusi's near-abstractions have for me, I would hazard that it is largely a sensuous surface appeal combined with creative massing of naked forms. In the *Muse* pictured here I feel that relating of masses which seems to me the nearest thing to pure and essential sculptural form that we can apprehend. But whether those related masses alone, without the faint basis in natural forms, and without the caressable, sensuous surface appeal, would speak to me as

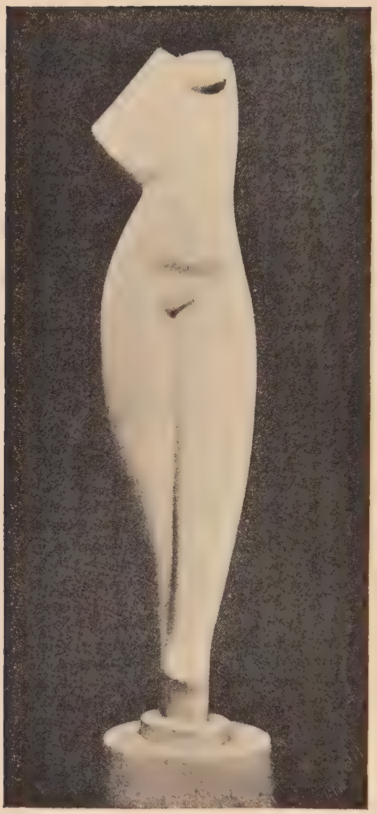


MUSE, BY BRANCUSI

strongly, I am not prepared to say. At any rate, Brancusi is one of the undoubted masters of near-abstraction and—legitimately or not—he adds a sensuous gloss to many of his architectonic compositions.

The search for rhythmic abstraction in sculpture led Archipenko into the invention of those "sculpture-paintings" which are one of the curiosities of latter-day Cubism. In these the artist attempted the fixation of linear rhythms against the obtruding and receding color planes of Cubist painting. The resulting panels seem, in general, to lack the sort of voluminous organization achieved by the few Cubist "masters," even while they rise above most of the aimless manipulation of planes practiced by a host of followers. Personally, judging from the few examples I have encountered, I feel that there is a distracting element in the mixing of painted colors (which have recessional values of their own) and planes in relief. In any case this seems a minor by-way of the art. Nor can more be said for that type of "non-being" sculpture with which Archipenko caused a limited furore a few years back. In this he attempted to capitalize some of the reverse values of volumes: space for certain plastic shapes, concave for convex, a hollow for a breast, etc. He achieved some amusing and some abstractly interesting mass-arrangements; but nothing approaching the values of his less perverse, near-abstract figures.

Archipenko already has entered into our deliberations at several points. He has achieved more kinds of acclaim and disapproval than any other modern sculptor, simply because he has pried into so many unlighted corners, bringing out new, if not always sound, ideas. There have been the successive matters of Cubist sculpture, non-being sculpture, sculpture-paintings, sculpture approaching abstraction, etc. And he is one of the cleverest and most exact academic draughtsmen living today! His less arbitrary work often shows excellent feeling for the essential relation of masses; and he has created elemental works like the *Repose* (page 251) and sensuously appealing things like the torso shown here. He is very important in the annals of the new sculpture—and yet it might be possible to name the half-dozen leading modernists without



TORSO, BY ARCHIPENKO

including him. Perhaps it is because, intense Expressionist that he is in his attitude toward subject-matter, and in his revelation of a purely personal emotion, he fails to capitalize the expressive values of that first material of sculpture, stone.

If some of us seem to overemphasize the importance of getting back to the stone, to direct cutting by the artist, it is because we recognize that for centuries clay modelling became a painty substitute for sculpture. The truly expressive quality that grows out of creative manipulation of the values *inherent in the material* was lost; in favor of the transferred lighter values gained out of the ease of modelling. The most creative of the moderns, with the exception of Lehmbruck, have gone back to the stone itself, sometimes with a passionate devotion, with a scornful indictment of all that is accomplished by modelling. In clay, they say, materials are pasted up into a work of art; sculpture instead is an art of cutting away, of subtraction, and is subject to entirely different laws from the moment the artist takes up his tools.

It would be stupid to insist that there is no art of clay modelling, or to try to rule out bronze statues as hopeless transfers. There is a characteristic technique of clay, and even a clayey surface effect that is pleasing in its own way, capable of its own expressiveness. This can be rendered fairly permanent, moreover, in terra cotta or in some of the new synthetic concrete-stones. But the test should be that the foreseen final effect control the artist's method from the start: that there be no fixing of clay looseness in shiny metal, that the artist frankly state, in his fingering, that he is a modeller and not a sculptor. Hermann Haller, by advertising his method in his surfaces, by intensifying the virtues of clay for their own sake, has risen to the position of one of the preëminent modellers of the time.

Haller escapes the censure of the moderns precisely because he does not utilize finger or tool modelling as a step toward a stone or metal work. For long we have been distressed by metal statues exhibiting the transferred vigorous finger work natural to clay, by bronzes bossed up into a lumpy and wrinkly technique wholly unsuited to metal. Jacob Epstein, among the important men, has laid himself open to criticism on this account. Some of his recent bronze busts are intolerably muddy in effect. The Expressionists ask that when an artist leaves the stone aside, when he deliberately sets out to model a figure in clay or wax or what not, with the ultimate aim of having it reproduced in metal, he manipulate each step in the light of the capabilities and limitations of the final metal product, driven by the vision of the metallic surface, the finely smooth final texture. Sketchy clay technique at the beginning can only be reconciled with final reproduction in clay-like materials.

In short, expressiveness of the material itself is now so deeply valued that the true sculptors—cutters—insist upon working direct in stone, gaining an essentially sculptural massiveness from the resistance of the rock to the tool, and from a mountainous quality in rock. But there is growing recognition that the minor related art of modelling, for later reproduction in bronze or terra cotta, has its own differing limitations and possibilities; while sculpture in wood emerges with still another well defined method and appeal.

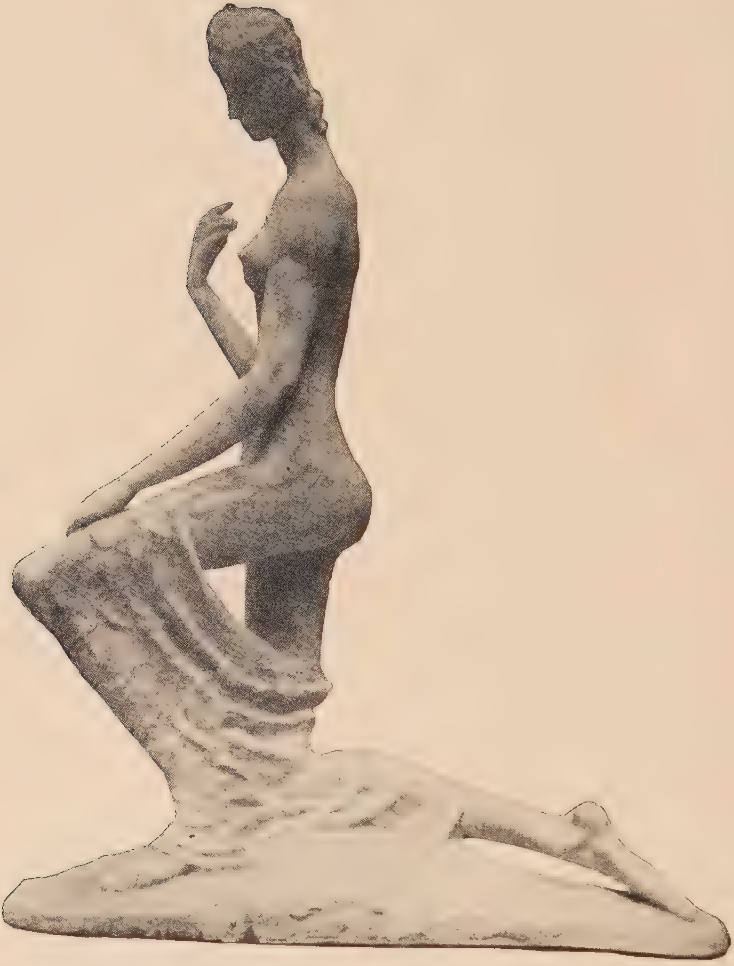
In the stone-working group Gill, Lachaise and Gaudier have been leaders. Maillol and Lehmbruck have taught us how terra cotta may serve to make permanent an expressive work originally shaped in clay; while Brancusi and Dobson have caught special values in metal. Incidentally I may add that I have recently found the particular appeal of wood capitalized, and giving pleasure, in exhibitions widely scattered, from a Barlach show in Berlin to an exhibition of the mahogany figures and panels of G. Fletcher Clark in California.

While any mingling of painting technique and sculptural seems to many of us futile, so that we dismiss lightly the sculpture-paint-

ANADYOMENE, BY ERIC GILL

ings of Archipenko, and damn the painter-like plastery modelling of the Victorian period, there is a definite and promising attempt to bring back color into sculpture. It was a chance error that led to the Western world's conception of classic sculpture as white. The ancients used color generously in most sculptural work. Today there are fruitful experiments toward the incorporation of color into the sculptural effect. And again Gill and Lachaise both have made notable contributions.

One other by-way of the art demands attention: that along which are ranged the compositions called "constructions." They were the beginning point of the Constructivism which is still richly effective in the theatres of Russia. I have seen whole rooms of them on exhibit, ranging from bits of pasteboard built into abstract figures to complex arrangements of wood and metal—sticks, wire, blocks,



KNEELING FIGURE, BY WILHELM LEHMBRUCK

cog-wheels, disks, cylinders, etc.—each attempting to achieve some balance or rhythm of line and form akin to an artistic creation. There can be no doubt that there is æsthetic purpose and achievement here, because displacing a block or changing a fulcrum disturbs the "construction" in such wise that the feeling of "form" is lost. But still I am inclined to be skeptical, or at least reserved—perhaps because the Dadaists ran away with that sort of thing; and I find that I derive the same thrill more easily from the lines of an automobile or airship, or in the power house.

Wilhelm Lehmbruck was a master who consistently sought the soul of sculpture. He absolutely cast loose from the naturalistic burden, and his main objective was to achieve something corresponding to what Cezanne called "the realization." Lehmbruck's earlier statues might well be placed next to Maillol's, in the between-periods "merely honest" group. But later a subtle sort of distortion of nature crept in, and was richly justified by the increased realization of the elusive form quality. Many of his figures lack the heaviness of most modern work, and yet only at a loss that seems compensated for in the "set" of the piece. Even so attenuated a work as the famous *Kneeling Woman,* illustrated here, has an appearance of geometrical solidity. And it has a sensitiveness, a contrapuntal ordering of slender volumes, almost unique.

How far Lehmbruck became careless of finish, even utterly contemptuous of the surface refinement that had been a first objective of Western sculpture through so many centuries, is indicated in the *Mother and Child,* a work of his last period. It is an example of instinctive organization combined with Lehmbruck's individual sensitive distortion. It is of exceptional interest here, perhaps, as exhibiting the sculptural counterpart of that heedlessness in the search for form which characterizes so many of the Expressionist painters: Kokoschka, Soutine, Schmidt-Rottluff, Nolde, etc.

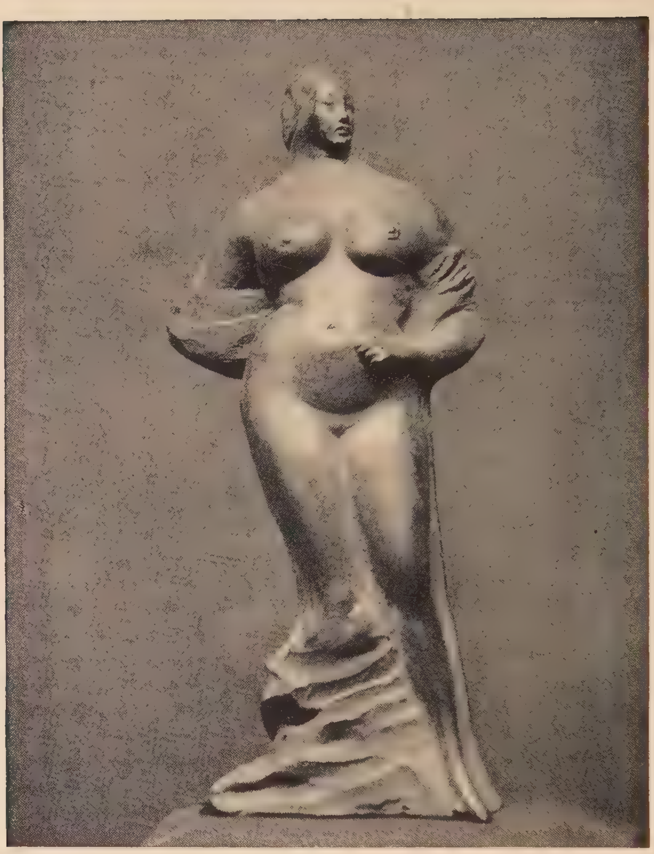
The American and British approach is not quite so headlong as the German. England, by the way, is now a country to be reckoned with, sculpturally, for the first time in history. Beyond Gill and Epstein, there is Frank Dobson, a rebel recognized internationally; and there is something of a school of moderns, as evidenced in the work of Alan Durst, Leon Underwood, Barbara Hepworth and John Skeaping. In America Gaston Lachaise is the dean of the modernists, and probably the most clear-headed and creative artist in the rapidly widening group of insurgent sculptors. Among the older men in the field with him are Alfeo Faggi, Trygve Hammer, Arnold Ronnebeck, John Storrs, Maurice Sterne and John Mowbray-Clarke. Recently the names of Roy Sheldon, Cecil Howard and William Zorach have been prominently brought forward. But even more noteworthy is the fact that a younger generation of sculptors, just graduated from the student class, has turned passionately back to the stone, has broken from the Paris tradition, and promises a new and glorious era of Expressionism in sculpture.

The academy exhibits, of course, tend still to be dull shows of eclectic and illustrative works. In every one there are numerous counterparts in stone and bronze of that famous painting by Leighton, *The Bath of Psyche,* the standard example of illustrated pink beauty (page 40). Whole sections of the sculpture shows, indeed, could be called "baths of Psyche," and no one to object. And there are sections of clever realistic animal studies, and "cute" animals and babes, and realistic cowboys and immigrants. And a section, probably, for Paul Manship's followers, formalizing dancing maids prettily; and a section for Daniel Chester French (not without a certain nobility) and the other modellers of the perennial symbolic

MOTHER AND CHILD,
BY WILHELM LEHMBRUCK

female. A section for the bulgy Rodin imitators in bronze and clay . . . and so on. But these things are not modern, and an understanding of sculptural vitality is the last conceivable thing animating any of the artists concerned.

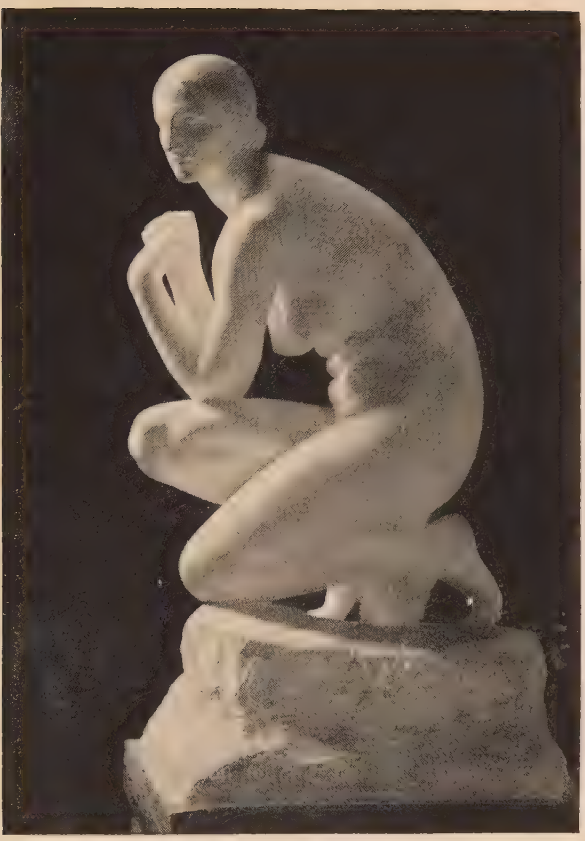
What is it, then, that Lachaise brings into our exhibition halls? Realized or only partly realized, it is that fourth-dimensional relating of masses, combined with a total lack of sentimentality, literary trapping or surface decoration. The sheer solidity, the direct stone-like feel, of the marble head illustrated on page 253, is typical of the sort of structural simplification, with little distortion of natural relationships, which characterized his earlier work. Another work shown, *Woman,* illustrates a characteristic attempt to pile up in sculptural form his emotional conception of the woman quality. This might serve as a study lesson for students of the modern, to



WOMAN,
BY GASTON LACHAISE

determine how far the abstract relation of mass and volume determines the result and how far the arbitrary balance of more or less natural forms: the small head and the mountainous breasts, the strong full torso and the tapering leg, etc.

The *Rising Woman* by George Grey Barnard, more austere, and less distorted for emotional gain, might well be recalled here by



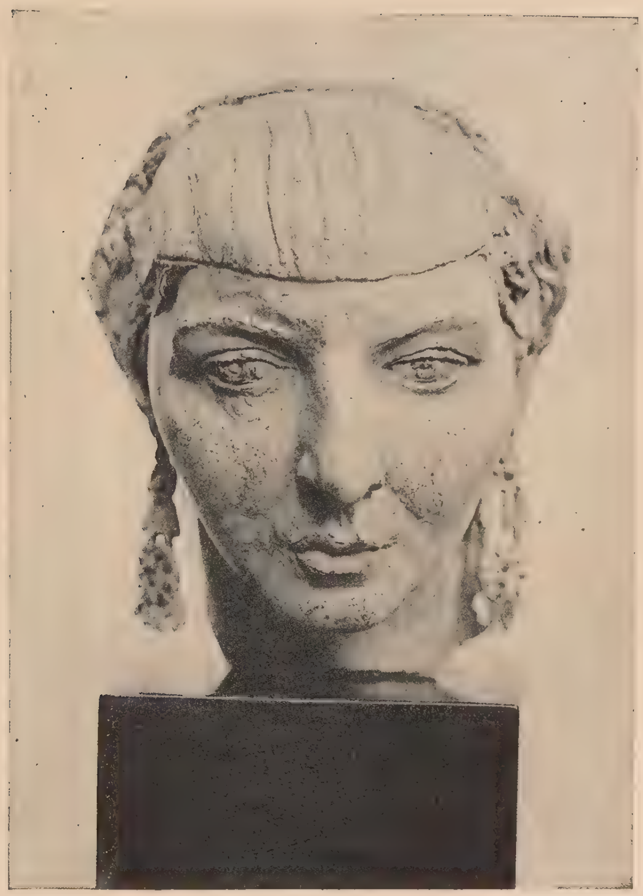
RISING WOMAN,
BY GEORGE GREY BARNARD

way of analogy and contrast. It achieves the same massiveness in simpler relationships. It is the work of a man who saw, when Rodin's Impressionism had come to rule the world of sculpture, a vision beyond Rodin. But there was no Expressionism in those days, no precedent for a man sick of precious surface qualities to cut and run regardless of all that the surface-sculptors valued.

Barnard tempered his insurgency rather with something he apprehended out of the giants of other times, out of the strong early Greeks and particularly out of the anachronistic Michael Angelo. He is the only man I can think of who seems to combine a classic purity of language with a true modernist's conception of form. Often the language controls, but there is enough of form in the *Rising Woman* alone to demand for him a place with the men here discussed.

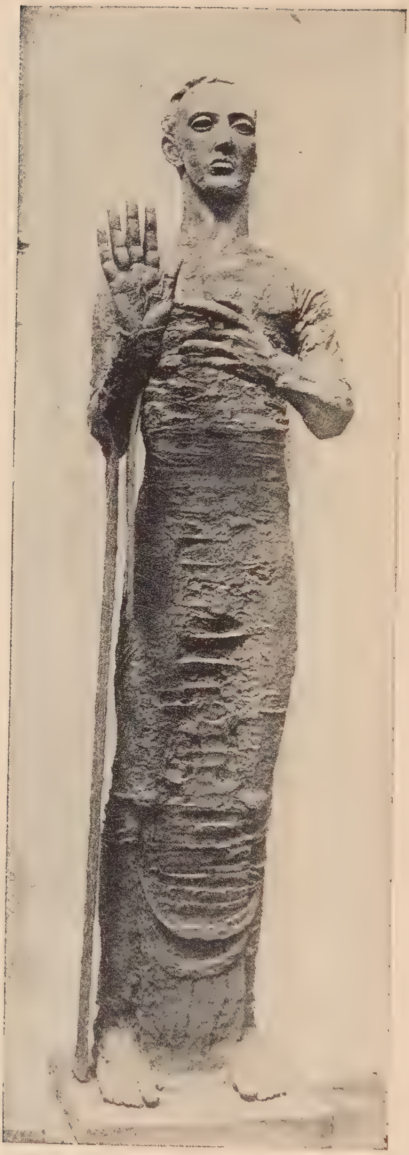
Jacob Epstein began by seeking sculptural form in its most stone-like and heaviest manifestations. But latterly he seems to have tried to combine his conception of the essential sculptural quality with a revelation of the soul of his model. He has gone down into realism so deep that he appears to fix the very soul of his subject in the clay mask. He is a master of the divination of character, and he is a masterly modeller. But in his recent work he has seemed to return contentedly to what is still a corner of the realistic field. A great many of the moderns are annoyed, too, by the illogical transfer of his finger-worked clay-studies into bronze: into metal castings that are distressingly knotty and pasty, and utterly unmetallic. He seems to have foregone a large part of the expressiveness of materials. Master of psychology he is, and supreme as portraitist in his own realm. He is sometimes called the greatest living sculptor; and certainly he stands among the few giants in the field today.

In choosing illustrations of Epstein's work, I have purposely limited the portraits to one: the very sensitive but very broadly modelled *Mask of Mrs. Jacob Epstein.* It exhibits the characteristic synthesis of apparently archaic and apparently realistic traits—the



MASK OF MRS. EPSTEIN,
BY JACOB EPSTEIN

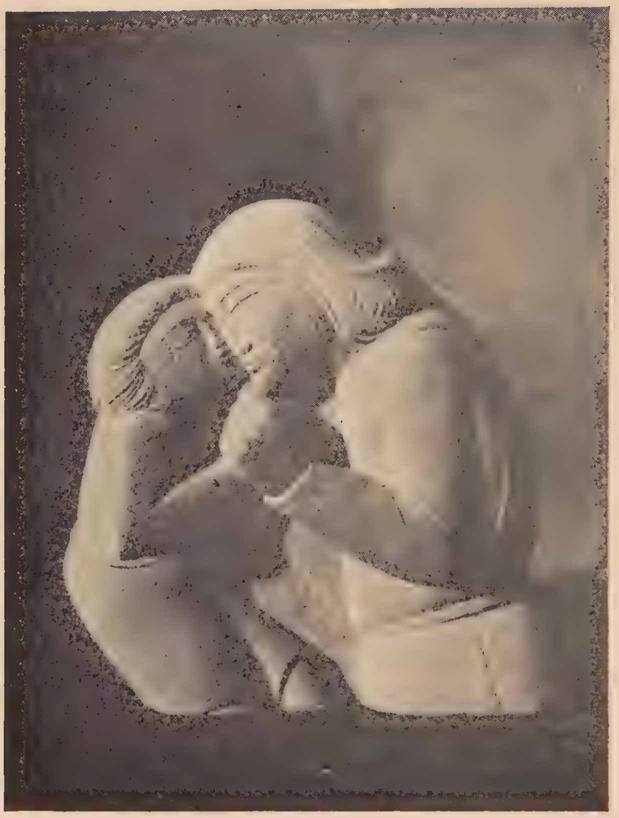
sculptural form and the psychological content; for the rest, there is on page 281 the very simple, very seductive *Mother and Child.* Herewith, in utter contrast, is the recent *Christ.* This last has provided fuel for one of the hottest controversial fires in the history of London "art circles." And well it might in a land where sculp-



CHRIST,
BY JACOB EPSTEIN

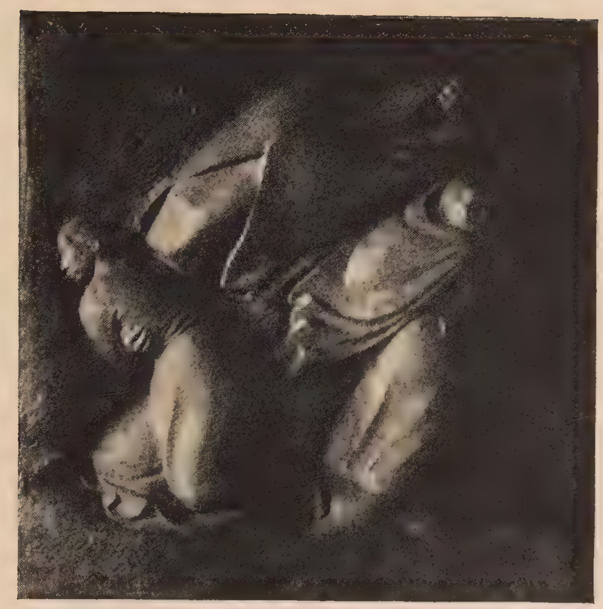
ture has traditionally been even politer and more watered than in America. Expressionistic it undoubtedly is—that is, careless of nature in the search for direct expression; look at the size of the hands and the "cut" of the figure. But I am wondering whether the critics and the small public who hailed it as one of the assuredly immortal works are not confounding intellectual expression with æsthetic expression. Much as I admire an architectonic quality in it, the way in which it builds sculpturally like a pillar, I feel nevertheless that it is primarily a work of the intellect, rather than an emotional conception. It is a sort of intellectual realism, in which the idea diverts from pure æsthetic enjoyment.

The people who call the formal dimension in painting "volume" or "voluminous form" would, I suppose, call the extra dimension in sculpture "movement." I have tried to find works which would illustrate a connotation of this word quite applicable to the new sculpture. It has nothing to do with the much-talked-about "arrested movement," the caught aspect or posed revealing attitude, of the Impressionists. That is dead movement. It has to do with organized volumes, instead, volumes poised on axes in a certain relationship. In its most obvious surface form, nearer a two-dimensional rhythm, it is illustrated in this wood sculpture by Ernst Barlach—which I take to be somehow related to the decorative branch of modern painting, to Gauguin and the early Matisse. In a more essentially sculptural form it is in the work of Gaudier and in the *Repose* of Archipenko, in Lehmbruck and in the *Woman* of Lachaise. It is in the monumental figures by Michael Angelo, in some Gothic architectural sculpture, and in a good deal of Egyptian and Chinese work. It is fixed in sculpture only by artists who



THE FOSTER FATHER, BY ERIC GILL

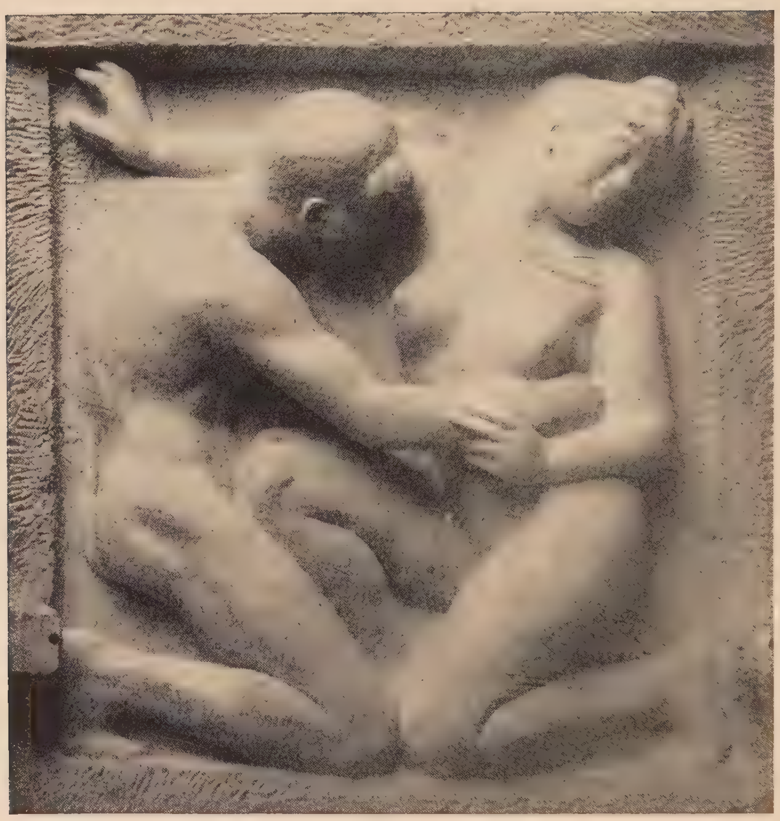
understand the profound relating of volumes in tension: not merely with "balance," but in a deeper contrapuntal relationship of sculptural masses. It is, of course, the living, vital quality, the elusive thing we have been trying to grasp, to pin down for examination, through all this book—but expressed here in sculptural, not two-dimensional values.



PANEL, BY ERNST BARLACH

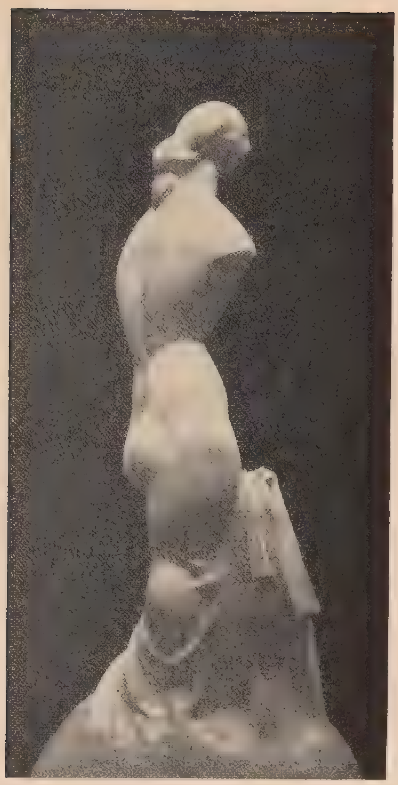
I know of no really understanding treatise on the relationship between modern architecture and modern sculpture. There is, I believe, a fundamental likeness in the form problems of the two arts. "Movement" is a dangerous word to use in explanation of any quality in architecture; and yet there assuredly is such a thing as tension of volumes in the main massing of a creatively designed building.

R. H. Wilenski applies the name "architectural sculptors" to the men who are primarily seeking what is here termed expressive sculptural form: in contrast to the Victorian "descriptive sculptors." Change the phrase to "architectonic sculptors" and I would subscribe to use of the term. In any case, the modern seeking for structure,



BAS-RELIEF, BY ARISTIDE MAILLOL

for solidity, for the stone feel, for ordered massiveness, as part of the "form" of the sculptural art, is a swing toward qualities precious to the building art. If the reader will look back at the series of illustrations in this and the preceding chapter, he will be able to note how easily these "statues" would accord with monumental architecture—as compared with any selection of the loosely modelled, naturalistic-illustrative pieces of the Victorian era. The newer



FIGURE,
BY EDWIN SCHARFF

sculpture might be of the very fabric of a building, not merely an excrescence, an ornamental afterthought, or a misplaced "show piece."

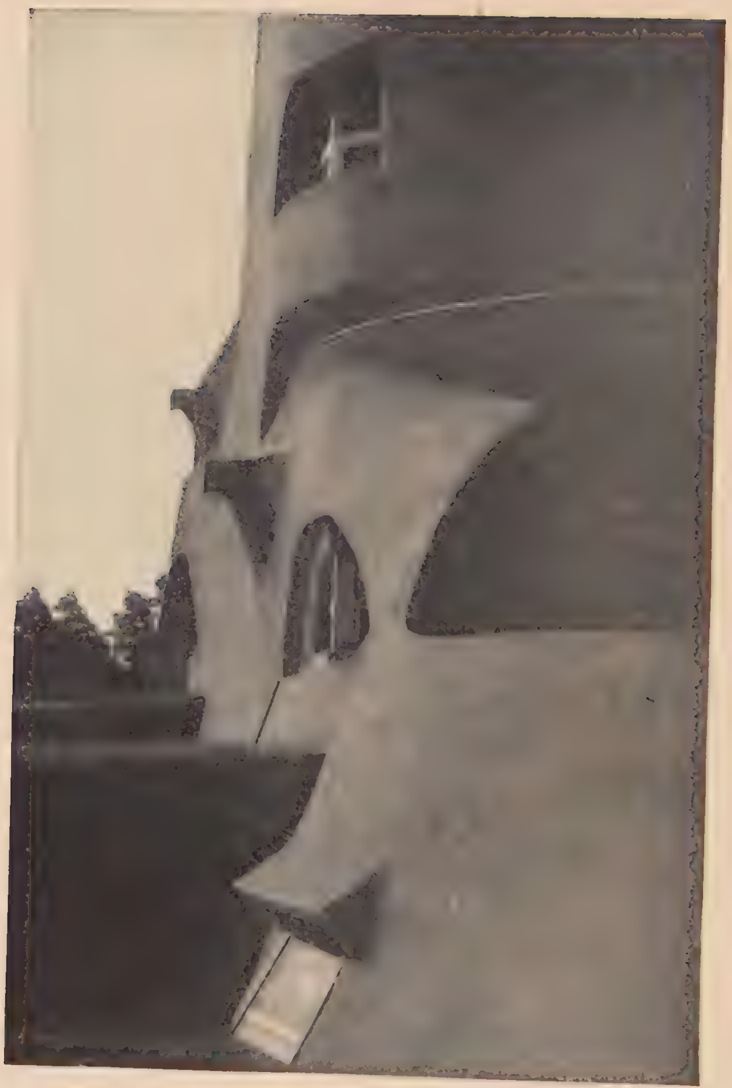
Doubtless we shall have more of sculpture wedded to architecture, and characterized by virtues that may be called architectonic, and less of "exhibition stuff." In Scandinavia, Holland and Germany great progress has been made recently in bringing the two arts together in a natural union. Carl Milles of Stockholm (who should have been mentioned before, with Maillol and Mestrovic and other leading conservative insurgents) has made a considerable part of his success in relating his designs to building; and Mestrovic seems to have surpassed his earlier work in designing and embellishing a tomb at Cavtat in Dalmatia. Here in America the sculptural "adornment" of important structures is too often a bit of patronage thrown to a sculptor by an architect who is a Classicist or an Eclectic or a man trained to the love of the typical Beaux-Arts flourish; at least it was that way until a modern architect began to raise his head here or there to the Westward.

But we have seen enough to know that sculpture has regained its birthright—after centuries of bondage to painting and photography. Perhaps there is already a new architecture not unworthy of association with this reborn sculpture, perhaps an architecture born similarly of the search for form. Let us inquire. . . .

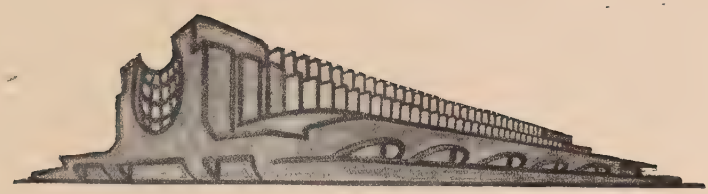
TOBIAS AND SARA, BY ERIC GILL

XV

THE NEW ARCHITECTURE



THE EINSTEIN TOWER, POTSDAM,
BY ERICH MENDELSOHN



SKETCH BY ERICH MENDELSOHN

ARCHITECTURE, in the nature of its materials and its purposes, cannot be "representative." Its lack of originality and vitality during the last four hundred years cannot be traced to exactly the same cause as the lack of creativeness in the graphic arts —to servile representation of the outward aspects of nature. But a clear parallel exists: Architecture has been servilely imitative of the "accepted styles"—imitative of what were authoritatively sanctioned as the masterpieces of earlier times. In the period between 1500 and 1900, roughly, it came to be a common supposition that the possible types of building art had been exhausted. Architects were content to work in classic or neo-classic, Greek or Roman, Gothic or neo-Gothic, Italian or French Renaissance. The trail of this false belief is to be seen written in stone across the façades not only of the buildings which are themselves the descendants of structures of ancient or mediæval days—churches, palaces, triumphal arches—but on the faces of nine-tenths of our business skyscrapers, our banks, our public libraries, our railroad terminals. These many centuries, architects have been the perfect type of imitative professional artist: cultured, correct, resourcefully decorative, tasteful—but they have been likewise unoriginal, tame, conventional, impotent.

Fortunately there is also a parallel to the 20th Century insurgency of the post-Impressionist painters and sculptors, a modernist development that has given us the first examples of a new creative architecture which goes, on the one hand, back to the fundamental principles of æsthetic building, and on the other, forward to a reflection of the spirit and uses of today, and to logical employment of today's materials. The architects who have so dared to defy convention are even more suspect in their own profession than are the modernist painters in theirs, and less known to the public; but the foundations they have laid are no less solid and secure, no less certain to carry the weight of the architecture of tomorrow.

Creative architecture practically went out when the designers of Gothic buildings turned their attention away from structural and organizational problems to refinements of decoration. The Renaissance, as the name implies, found its source in classic architecture, although the Florentine Palace type had something strong and expressive in it that suggests new blood and original thinking. But French Renaissance and English Renaissance are merely imitative developments, marked by differing modes of prettifying their models, by varying types of refinement in the decorative elements. The same old girl, getting pretty seedy looking if one inquired beyond the surface, dolled up in changing fashions of clothing! And inasmuch as French clothes are more showy and have better lines than English or German or Italian, French Renaissance or post-Renaissance architecture has been a world fashion these several generations. If the statement seems broad, you might look up pictures of the palaces of Brussels, Moscow, Petrograd, Scandinavia, the Balkan states, the German capitals, etc., etc., or look at the "show" theatres of Europe, from Bucharest to Stockholm and Lisbon, in

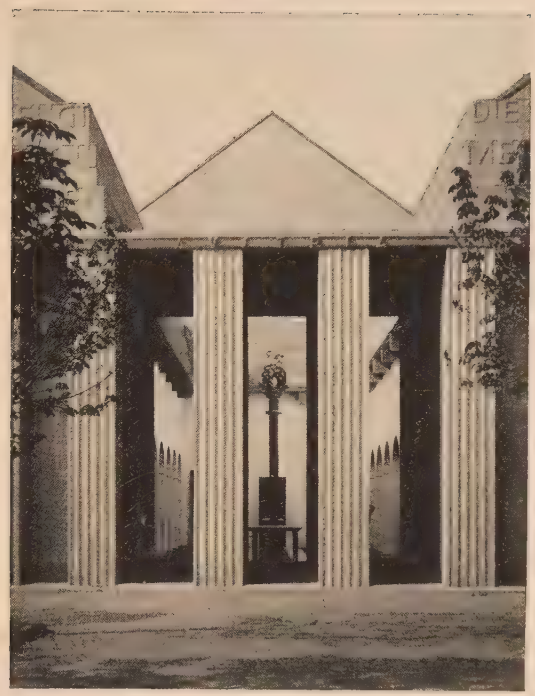
SKETCH BY ROB MALLET-STEVENS

London, New York, San Francisco, Tokyo, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, etc., down to your home-town "opera house." Nine-tenths of them aspiring to be little Paris Opera Houses. Or stand where you are and look up at the nearest "architectural monument;" the New York Public Library, the Grand Central Terminal, the firehouse in the middle of your block, or Senator So-and-So's new mansion, or whatever building happens to be the "ornament" to your particular town. Well, of course, the statement is too broad; we are still building a certain number of Gothic churches, the Boston Public Library is solid Italian, not French Renaissance, and English Collegiate is having a vogue in college towns.

But French architecture dominates the Western world today—by right of putting up the prettiest decorated front, when fronts are chiefly what the designer sees in the word "architecture"; and our "leading" architects are Beaux-Arts men, trained in a Paris school and saturated with Parisian culture. Thus it comes about that the chief epithet of opprobrium in the mouths of the truly modernist builders is "Beaux Arts"; and France, instead of breeding the first rebels as in the graphic arts, lags last in the development of a typically modern architecture. The rest of the nations are outdistancing

France because, having got into the lying habit of putting French clothes over their buildings, they are beginning to recognize the lying quality of it. They are beginning to see, too, that clothing buildings in *any* pre-existing style is not honest creation; that it is necessary for the style, if there must be such a thing, to grow out of the living architect, his times, the spirit and the materials of those times.

The architecture of the late 19th Century, and with rare but very important exceptions, that of the 20th Century, is sham art not only in the sense of thus being falsely dressed-up, but in its structural dishonesty. I am thinking particularly of our American business buildings now, because they are more usually a shell on a steel frame—although hollow columns are by no means unknown to country houses and cottages everywhere. A frame of a sort unknown to earlier centuries is constructed, and on that the architect hangs a façade with decorations that grew out of ancient structural functions which have no longer any validity. Columns that pretend to carry the weight, but are simply set in when the actual organic structure has been completed; buttresses that have no side-thrust to resist, that are built up uselessly beside the steel-supported wall to make a false show of style; deep-cut openings in the stone facing to give the "effect" of heavy masonry, where only the lightest shell of stone or brick is structurally needed; Roman or regal French "fronts" on a railroad terminal that has functions never dreamed of by the Romans or the French courts; cornices hung up uselessly on flat-roofed buildings: these are some of the commoner dishonesties of our best architects. Our current architectural magazines are still full of them; they are taught as "architectural art" in the training

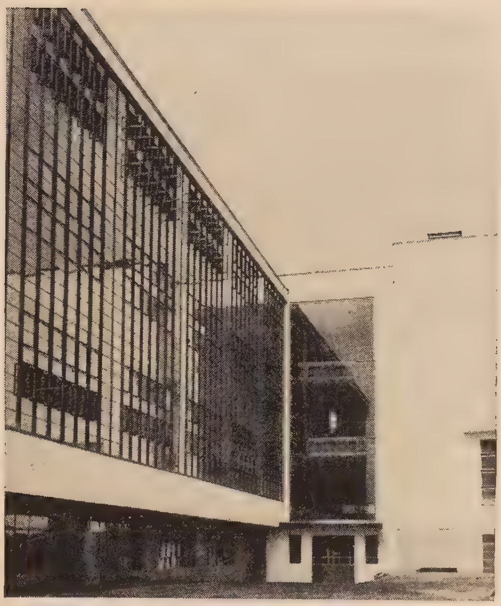


EXPOSITION BUILDING AT COLOGNE,
BY JOSEPH HOFFMANN

schools. For that art consists of the designing of façades, without first emphasis on structural truth. At best this current practice and teaching show up world architecture, except for a handful of rebels, as confessedly uncreative, imitative, eclectic, feeble; at worst, as dishonest, hypocritic, willing to steal (tastefully), irresponsible—and withal conceited over it.

The modern architect who comes at his work creatively brings to it an honest conception of *building* as such. Fundamentally, I suppose, the problem of architecture is to build walls and roof and knock the necessary holes for entrance and light. (Look some day at the New York Public Library with that truth in mind, to see how far the architect has strayed toward considering decorative elements instead of this fundamental problem.) Beyond that there is the matter of organization of masses—much the same problem of space and volume that the sculptor has to treat. If I were teaching a group of architectural students, I would start them not on the "orders" but on problems of form-composition, organization of cubes or blocks, volume relationship, for that is at the heart of their problem of design. Expressive form in architecture comes out of the "reality of use," if I may so put it—something paralleling that structural reality of subject matter which we discussed in connection with painting and sculpture; and out of the architect's emotion over his building, his experience of the exciting "feel" of building; and out of the potentialities of his materials, the opportunity to intensify some quality of the brick or stone or steel or wood that he employs. Honesty of conception, truth to purpose, expressive shaping according to some emotional conception, form-seeking within the limits of function and material—these are the only suggestions I shall make here of the æsthetic principles underlying modernist practice, as against that of the men who deify style, charm and refinement.

The first real modernists were more engineers than architects. They went in for straight, unadorned, undisguised *building*. They created some of the least obnoxious factories we have, and some fine monuments like the Brooklyn Bridge, High Bridge and many railroad constructions. But there were attempts to come at a modern style through decorative elements even before any marked structural movement took direction. One of these decorative styles

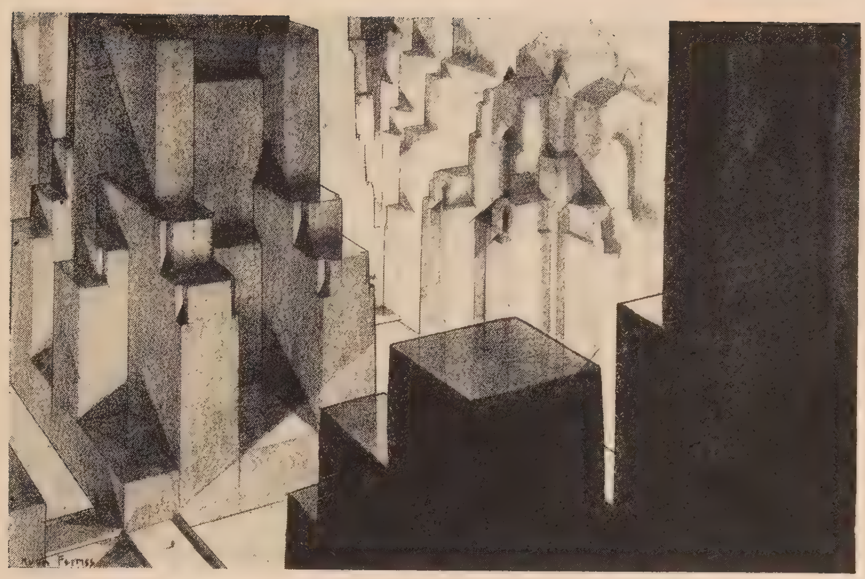


REAR OF THE BAUHAUS, DESSAU
WALTER GROPIUS, ARCHITECT

achieved a considerable vogue in Europe, and left its traces in America—under the name "Art Nouveau." It was a terrible thing because it sought to cover up structural dishonesty with a sickly sort of curved-line ornamental distraction. It was doubtless hailed as "modernism" in its day; but it never got below the surface, and was rightly laughed out of court. Tasteful imitation, even with the hand of death on it, was better than such a forced style.

A later decorative approach *was* fruitful of at least sensuously pleasing results, however. It culminated in what I can only call "Viennese Secession" architecture. It has a certain validity because it demands a return to simple lines and flat spaces before it begins to decorate; and its ornament is the loveliest, most seductive sort ever invented by a sophisticated civilization. Its masters are the Viennese architects, Hoffmann, Witzmann, Strnad and their fellows, and Joseph Urban has transported their style—so far as interiors go—to New York with its appeal intact. We also see the fruiting of it, with a slight French flavor, in the Cammeyer Building on Fifth Avenue. But Hoffmann remains the chief, as he was one of the first masters. His box-like arrangements, from which he has cut off all traditional ornament, but with the edges decorated in typical Viennese fashion, with "just the touch," marked something new in exteriors; and the interiors, panelled with a perfect sense of decorative proportioning and hung with all-over patterns of ravishing color and design, have set the fashion recently for interior decorators in all the Greenwich Villages the world over. A fine advance it is, too, in this time when dullness had become a virtue, color a crime, and methodism the standard of respectability. In addition to an example of Hoffmann's work, I am adding a typical suggestive sketch by Rob Mallet-Stevens, who has done (on paper) the prettiest and catchiest things that have come out of France in this posteresque Secession mode. But as I have said in an earlier chapter, a primarily sensuous surface art, appealing as it may be, and grateful as we are for it as compared with the dull dignified thing, does not hold the soul of great creative art. It is too largely decoration for its own sake—there is something deeper.

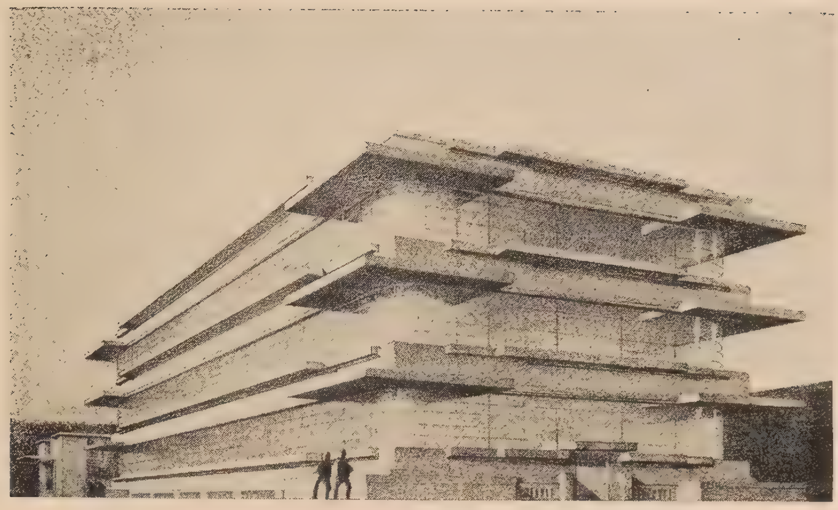
The really great new architecture grows primarily out of the new problems of an industrial civilization, out of housing its business and out of housing its workers and its capitalist-aristocracy—and



STUDY OF SKYSCRAPER FORMS, BY HUGH FERRISS

this new architecture can hardly be said to have found its decorative mode. The skyscraper is the typical building of this time; typical of the fine energy, courage, ultimate though hardly realized aspiration; but typical, too, of the ruthlessness, the selfish exploitation, the financial tyranny. One would think that the architects would have detected immediately the basic æsthetic premise here, would have grasped the possibility of capitalizing height, the sky pierced, scores of stories built up, up, thousands of windows, perfected steel articulation that permitted the building to *tower.* But they have failed almost continuously, all but wasted the opportunity that is America. They uninventively stuck to their traditional, schoolbook methods. They built disguising masks over the tower-ing steel skeletons. They tried to make the skyscraper look what it was not—a low, reposeful, Greekish structure. They succeeded usually in making it look like several poor academic buildings piled on each other—characteristic that was, too, of the cultural confusion they felt when faced with this new problem. Particularly they are guilty almost everywhere of breaking the logical upright lines by repeated horizontal lines, courses, colonnades, entablatures, cornices, whatnots. They knew horizontal designing and thought to compress the skyscraper into it.

Now up to this point I have (in rewriting the book in 1931) left this chapter as I originally wrote it in 1923. Perhaps nothing could indicate better the rapidity of the slide toward modernism in the building art than that picture of the architecture of Eclecticism, as it was practiced up to 1925, in contrast with the architecture of the machine age as I shall sketch it in the following pages, as its early manifestations have emerged in the period 1925-1931. Substantially, the devitalized, traditionally imitative architects controlled practice during the first quarter of the new century. Beaux-Arts men designed our best theatres, libraries, clubs, railroad terminals, etc., disguising their functions, and perverting materials. Even skyscrapers were dressed in the garments of the past. But today we see the large American cities dominated by soaring buildings wholly untouched by any historic decorativeness; there are towns in Germany where "Functionalist" architecture is so usual that one can walk blocks and blocks and look in vain for a Greek column, a Gothic buttress, or a French-court cartouche; in Russia the styles of the past are banned, officially and by public opinion; in Holland a special sort of modernism rules in nine-

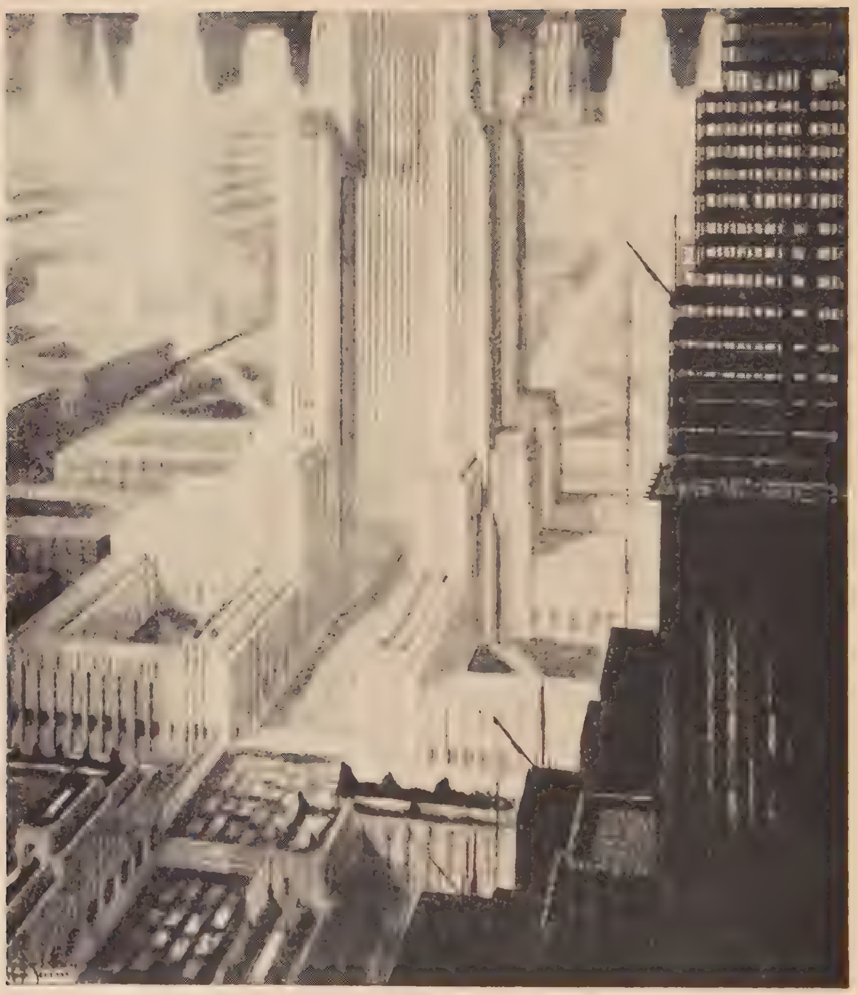


DESIGN FOR FACTORY GROUP, BY NORMAN-BEL GEDDES

tenths of the new building; and even in our own country, particularly in the far West, the Eclectics are on the defensive, their forces dwindling, their methods and their "art" widely discredited. Already, from the world viewpoint, there is a body of works affording warrant for the phrase, "the new architecture."

Before 1925, of course, there were the pioneer agitators, and a very few finely creative practitioners. The two men who had most to do with the world revolution were Americans: Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. With them in the early days had stood H. P. Berlage in Holland and Otto Wagner in Austria. A considerable group of German rebels developed soon after, nursed on the ideas of these leaders; and recently the movement has claimed converts in France and even in England.

At first, perhaps, the engineers did more than any group of architects to bring architecture out of the welter of deceitfulness,

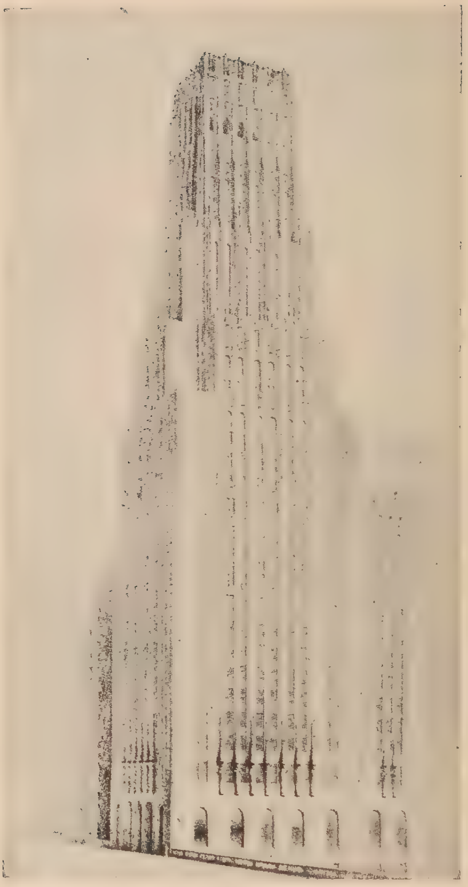


AN IMAGINARY CITY, BY HUGH FERRISS
(From copyright drawing by courtesy of American Institute of Steel Construction)

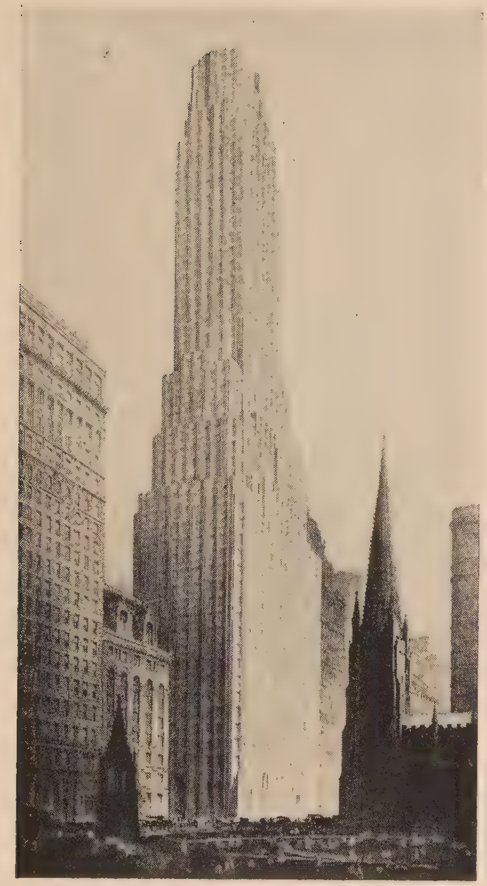
timidity and sham. In some early skyscrapers they knew no better than to be honest in the use of their materials, to confess the metal skeleton within, to let the height of the structure declare itself, undisguised and unashamed. They also built some finely proportioned bridges and some honestly functional factories—all without benefit of Paris-trained architects. Then came the architect-engineer, the man who sees building before decoration, the structure and the mass before the facade: the imaginative-emotional lover of the art of building. At this time emerged Louis Sullivan, the great American pioneer, the Whitman of the building art. Even forty years ago he was outrageously revolutionary. He asked architects to be honest, to substitute service and love for display, to learn architecture from the ground up rather than from ornament part way down, to cut through the falsities of convention to the foundations of the æsthetics of building and of our American civilization. He was an outcast in his own profession, for he castigated the "cultured" architects unmercifully, and showed up in no uncertain terms the lying, egotistical quality of their work. If in the last ten years the skyscraper has oftener and oftener confessed that it is a honeycomb tower of steel, with a protecting encasement of stone, brick or tiling, if the decorative features measurably have grown out of its soaring lines, out of its steel and concrete skeleton, its immense expanses of glass, its new means of suspending floors high in air, Louis Sullivan is to be credited more than any other individual. No other architectural dictum has been so quoted recently, in Europe and America, as Sullivan's warning, "Form must follow function."

As regards the skyscraper, which was being mis-designed,

DESIGN FOR
CHICAGO TRIBUNE
BUILDING,
BY ELIEL SAARINEN



blanketed in historic ornamental remnants, in all the years from 1895 to 1920, there began to be isolated signs of direct thinking and even creative handling of the special problems involved, in the period immediately following the latter date. In 1922 the *Chicago Tribune* held an international competition for the creation of "the most beautiful office building"; and although the first prize was

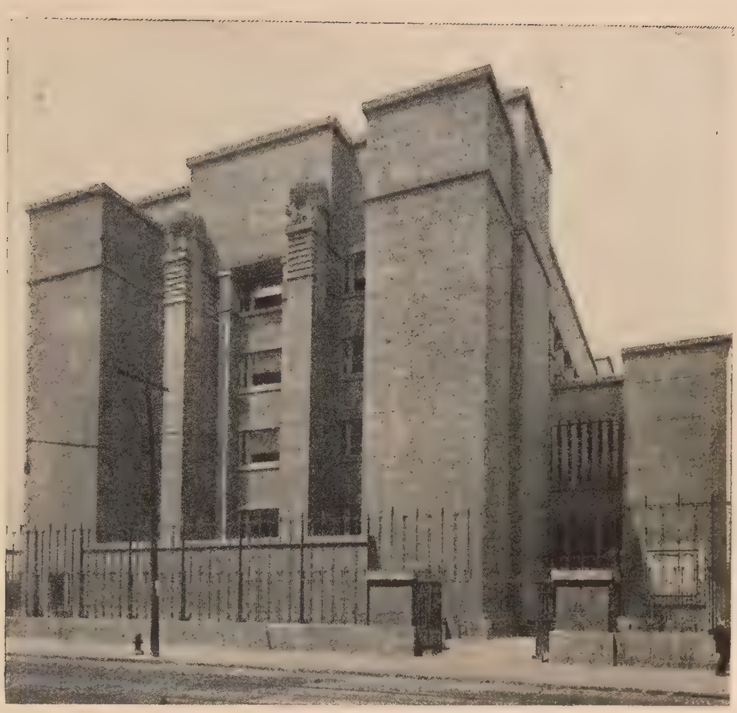


IRVING TRUST
COMPANY BUILDING,
VOORHEES, GMELIN
& WALKER, ARCHITECTS
(From copyright by Chester B. Price)

awarded to a conventional adaptation of the Gothic, the design placed next was so logical, so creative, that (although rejected) it had more influence on young architects and students than any other single exhibit in the whole pageant of modernism. This drawing, by Eliel Saarinen of Helsingfors, Finland, was published and republished—and I add it to my illustrations here, for its obvious architectural values no less than for its importance as a landmark in architectural progress.

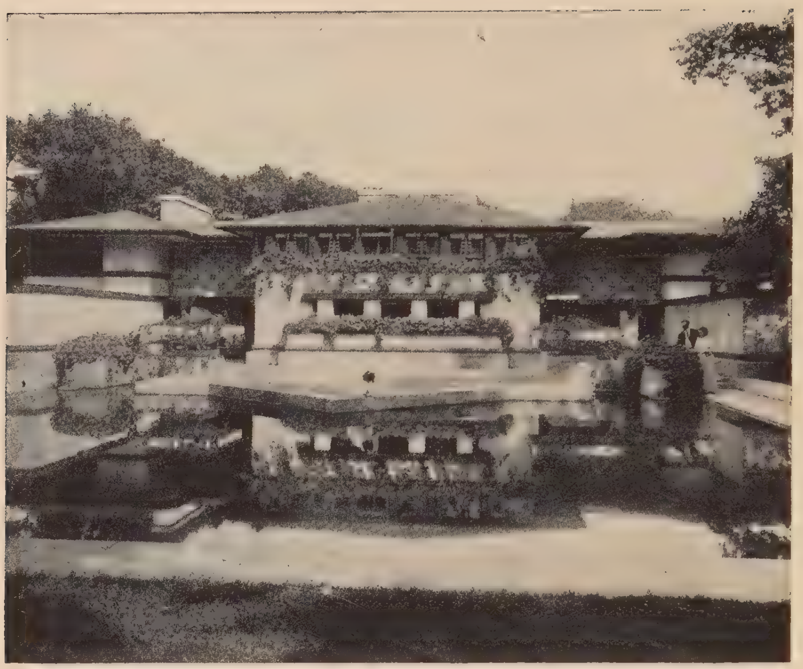
About the time of the Chicago event there began to appear some suggestive designs for "skyscraper cities" by a man not himself a practicing architect, but an imaginative artist destined to have wide influence on all later designers of business buildings. Hugh Ferriss has continued to create intriguing illustrations of future cities; and the imaginativeness, integrity and stark beauty of his designs, entirely outside the old academic formulas, have been echoed in a hundred skyscrapers of the past five years. How clearly Ferriss foresaw the trend of the art will be made evident by comparison of his drawing at page 324 with the architects' drawing for the Irving Trust Building, since erected at 1 Wall Street, New York City. Ralph T. Walker, of the firm Voorhees, Gmelin and Walker, designers of the latter edifice, is one of the leaders among progressive architects in New York City today. With him should be named, perhaps, Ely Jacques Kahn, Raymond M. Hood, and William E. Lescaze. The most imaginative and original artist among the Eastern architects, however, is Norman-Bel Geddes—like Ferriss an outsider, not an accredited professional architect.

None of these designers, however, has proved himself a pioneer and a creative revolutionary of the caliber of Sullivan. With that first of the insurgents can be named only one figure, a man once associated with him, Frank Lloyd Wright. There are no Wright skyscrapers: he has been concerned with home building and the more intimate sorts of commercial structure—though he built also type examples of revolutionary factory and church. For two decades past Wright has been considered by many progressive



THE LARKIN FACTORY, BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

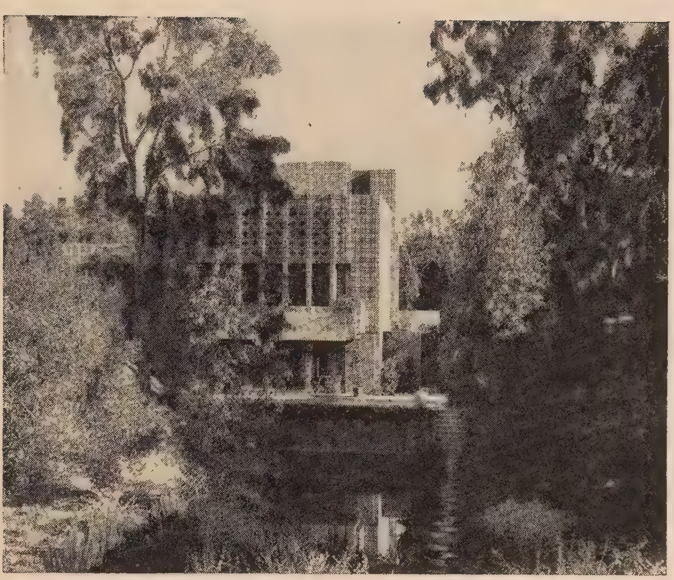
European (and Asiatic) critics and artists as the greatest living architect. In his early days he came so near to inventing a style in residential architecture that one can go into any American suburb and pick the houses done by his imitators or their imitators; and in some sections of Europe what is known as "the American style" is straight Wright. (There are six books about him published in European languages, but none published in England or America.) His early mode of building was marked by total absence of traditional ornament or "motives," by creative organization of the main masses, accentuation of these masses by emphasized roof



HOUSE, BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

lines, "banding" of windows, constant play of texture interest in his materials, and a general sense of horizontal repose, fitness to the surrounding scene, and "color" in the broadest sense. Sometimes in his houses, and almost extravagantly in a conception like the Midway Gardens, an open-air resort in Chicago, he runs to an individual decorative motive based on flat geometrical forms, an abstract composing in wooden beams, crossbars and projections.

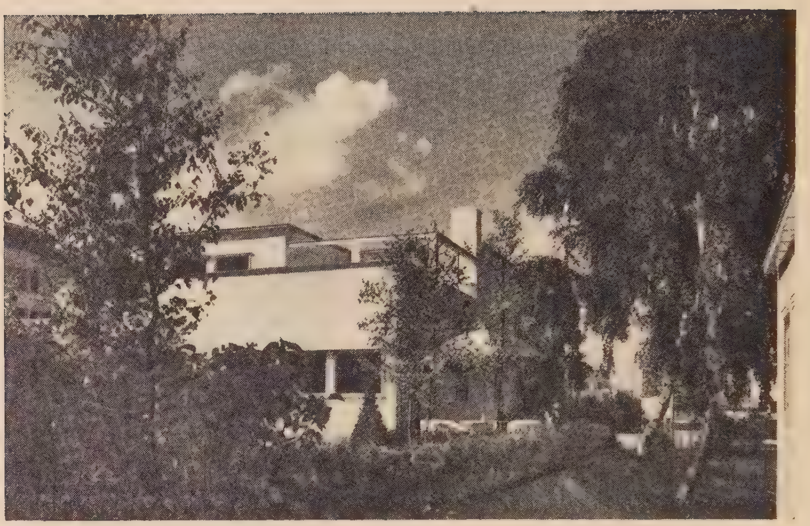
More recently Wright has developed "styles" based on his own logical use of concrete. In Los Angeles he built in massive blocky forms, expressing the heaviness of poured concrete. Then he invented a way of building with pre-cast, ornamental, interlocking



HOUSE IN PASADENA,
BY FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

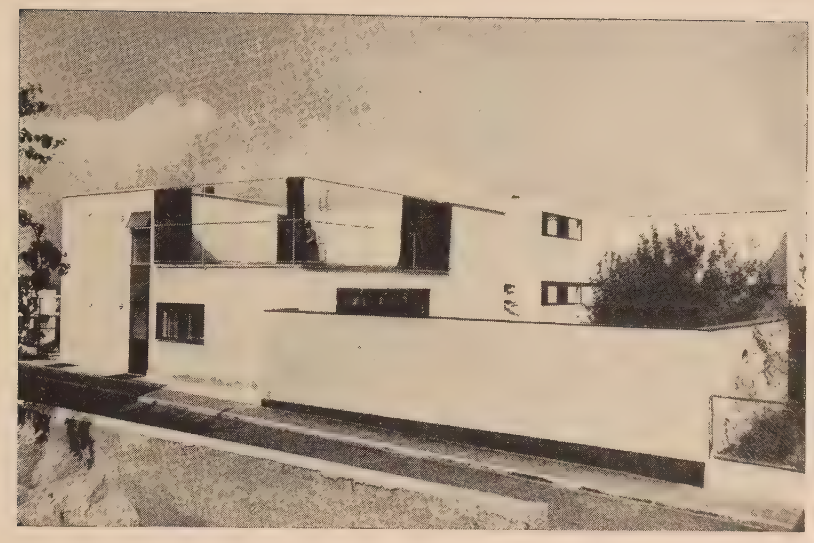
concrete blocks, and out of this standardized-unit method evolved another characteristic decorative form. He remains today the most creative force in American, if not in world architecture.

There are insurgent architects who oppose Wright's achievement almost as bitterly as they decry the old Eclectic reliance upon picking and choosing from the past. They are the radicals who believe that Functionalism unadorned is the only true modernism. They claim that when architecture is right, in the sense of serving its utilitarian purpose perfectly, while remaining true to materials, it needs no ornamenting. They deny the validity of Hoffmann's or Wright's accenting and enriching, even though the ornament be wholly original, even if it is clearly reflective of function and of ways of living in the machine age.



FUNCTIONALIST HOUSE IN STUTTGART,
BY HANS POELZIG

Some of the Functionalist architecture of Germany goes far to prove the attractiveness of a mode that begins and ends with creative handling of mass, utterly honest use of materials, and a machine-like cleanliness of finish. Particularly the work of Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Peter Behrens offers proof of the appealing values realized before ornamentation begins. Le Corbusier in Switzerland and France has done interesting things in the mode. And of course Russia, with a passionate worship of all that is scientific and rational, has adopted the style for all future building. (But the famous Lenin Mausoleum in Moscow adds rich color to the commoner Functionalist resources.) My illustrations of houses in the Weissenhof suburb at Stuttgart are typical of the stripped aspect, and of the clean-cut attractiveness, of the work of the Functionalists.



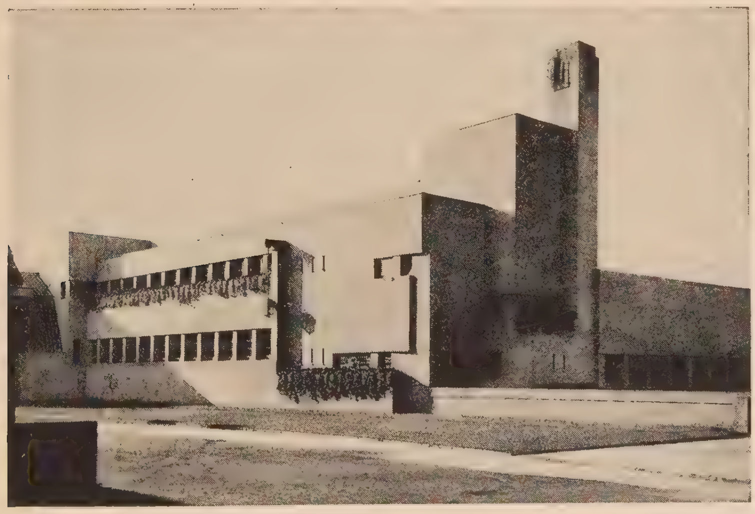
FUNCTIONALIST HOUSE IN STUTTGART,
BY WALTER GROPIUS

Personally I doubt the permanent value of an architectural creed that denies any validity to ornament, even when designed integral to structure. But that there is great gain in a return to fundamental stripped building, as a beginning point for true modernist effort, cannot be disputed. I sometimes find the German Functionalist buildings a bit too bare and hospital-like; but that they are infinitely superior to the Victorian stuffy elaboration and Beaux-Arts showiness, we all can grant.

For most eyes the form value in architecture is easier to detect than the corresponding extra-dimensional value in painting. Once we get past the notion (educated into all of us in our school years) that there is something especially "artistic" about any building with Greek columns on its front, once we learn to look at the structure as an organism, we feel the crag-like skyscrapers of New York or San Francisco speaking to us clearly, even thrillingly; and our eyes find a blessed pleasure as we roam the new German suburbs or pause in a modern California garden. The most exciting experience, of course, is that offered by the New York sky-line. These up-pushing towers, sheer crags and soaring piers stir us tremendously; and we know at last that architects have used their materials of modernism honestly and intuitively, have felt and expressed the emotion of our own daring and lawless civilization, have become again creative artist-builders. It need not trouble us too much that history may point out the chaotic and piratical aspects of today's skyscraper building, the unregulated crowding and the individual selfish plundering of light and air. It will, I believe, note also that this was the first spectacular emergence of creative architecture after almost seven hundred years of stagnation of the art. It will record that ours was the height of commercial-nationalistic civilization, the peak of exploitational business enterprise and greed, and that the skyscrapers truly memorialize that. If elements of evil enter into what is expressed, this architecture is nonetheless genuinely Expressionistic.

The prettier phase is in the new architecture of Holland—there J. J. P. Oud is a master—and in the houses built by Gropius and van der Rohe in Germany. (The equally original creations of Erich Mendelsohn exhibit more of the commercial-industrial feel of naked power.) Out here in California there is a considerable array of buildings by Wright and his associates, and some local architects have sheared off the ornamental excrescences of the old Spanish-Colonial style, arriving at a mechanical-simple type of house that belongs peculiarly to the place and the age. There is, in most Western countries, I think, no other art in which it is so easy to find, in our everyday wanderings, examples of expressive form, of rhythmic manipulation of the materials of the art.

There are outward idioms, easily recognized, common to much of the new architecture. Their origin can be traced to the nature of the materials now used in building, and to the "feel" of the machine age. There are long, clean lines, hard edges, metal-sheer surfaces, sanitary smoothness, and simple massive volumes. Occasionally, there is colorfulness beyond, and a frankly decorative enrichment (not copied) by the architect of today. All these things are part of the essence, the "form," that speaks to the soul direct, not through the historically trained intellect. Architecture no longer is a merely imitative art. The age of expression has arrived once more.



SCHOOL AT HILVERSUM, BY W. DUDOK

MOVEMENT—FROM AN ETCHING BY GORDON CRAIG

XVI

THE CHANGING THEATRE

THE art of the theatre is stirred by the same forces of rebellion and renewed life that I have tried to trace in painting, sculpture and architecture. No other art, to be sure, is so wrapped up in confusion, contradiction and vain shoutings regarding its modernism; but that is only an outcome of the multiple nature of the stage, play and actor as an art medium, and the exceptional difficulty of bringing to final material consummation in a theatre any strikingly new conception. We have had, indeed, precious few examples of complete, rounded-out modernist productions in which the spirit of post-Impressionistic art characterized play, acting and mounting: the progress has been so piecemeal, indeed, that I find myself faced with the necessity of tracing the movement successively and separately through the experiments of theorists, playwrights and "decorators." For that very reason I wish to begin by affirming that the larger theatre can move forward only by developing a new drama, a new stage, a fresh standard of acting and a new stagecraft concurrently. Developing a remarkably able group of clear-thinking scenic artists is not enough; nor is it enough to call in the ablest artists out of painting, literature, dancing, etc.

For there are expressive forms that pertain particularly and peculiarly to the theatre, and the artist can capture them only through a thorough consideration and love of the complete theatre as such. They are not likely to be discovered by casual invaders who think in terms either of Expressionistic painting or of free verse, or of theories of gesture-and-music or æsthetic dancing or stylized acting. The stage, while partaking of the materials and of the nature of these other arts, has its own *form* in a synthesis of their collective values and something more. The true artist of the theatre will create from visions of the theatre as a whole—stage and auditorium, movement and sound, light, color, poetry, humanity, acting, soul related to soul.

Negatively, the movement has closely paralleled the anti-realistic current in the graphic arts. There has been, indeed, a well-defined struggle to free the stage from the centuries-old obsession with representation and imitation, to free it for creative expressiveness; to find ways of escape from the sphere of sentiment, anecdote, plot-weaving and photography, into a sphere where beauty of form might be locked with the release of the spirit. It is but natural, however, that a composite art which has become also a great business, with vast numbers of non-artists dependent upon it for their living, should resist change even more bitterly than the comparatively "removed" arts of painting and sculpture. The greater number of playwrights, actors, designers and other workers for the current theatre, having dedicated their lives to making a certain sort of drama live, naturally defend it against the attack of the modernists with all their weapons. They are even better entrenched than the academic painters: they are in possession of the very expensive machinery of the art.

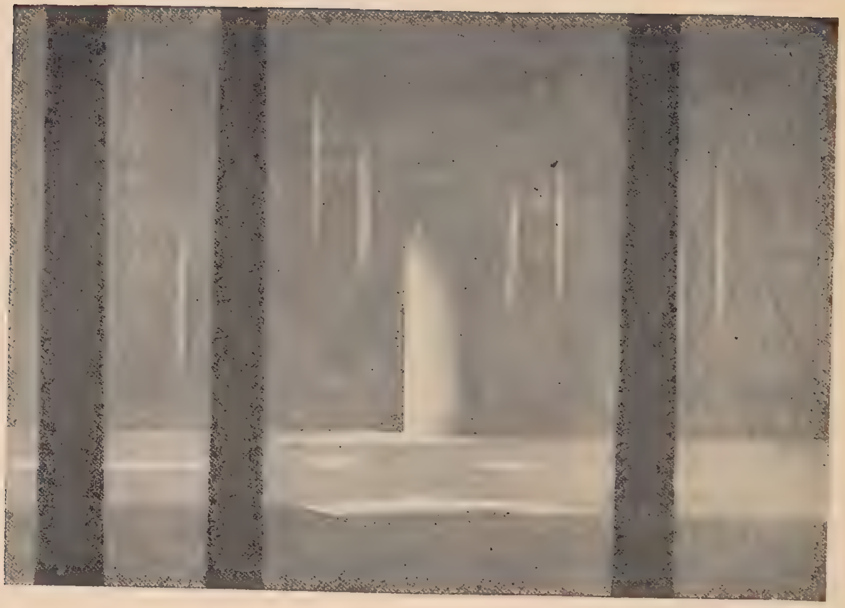
Looking at the question with the larger perspective of a study of the theatre's entire history, however, one is tempted to ask: why *should* realism be expected to live? Recognizing that drama began as religious ritual, grew to noble group-entertainment in art and ritual fused, had very distinctive theatrical "form," and then decayed in spectacle and realistic mimicry; was reborn at the church altar, became the people's outlet for their spiritual and play life, then flowered in poetic-theatric expression, only to fall away into a weak purveyor to the people's desire for sentiment, romance and sophisticated story-telling; and finally narrowed itself down to objective picturing of observed or imagined existence, and so to the curiosity-satisfying analytic-photographic play and the peep-hole stage of today, concerned with the surprises and taboos of individual living—the whole a record extending from the gods through imagination and romance to contemporary life, with innumerable branchings, decayings, rebirths; recognizing this as the constantly changing history of the theatre, why, in heaven's name, should anyone think that the realistic-romantic drama is a *final* form? Not only is there nothing to indicate that *any* form can ever be considered final, but everything points to realism as the decadent thing, as the drama farthest removed from the spirit, as the expression of ages that have become material, self-conscious, devitalized. Moreover, realism with us today has already come to the impasse created by its own perfecting. It finds at last that it has encompassed, not the emotion of mankind, the spirit of a people, or formal beauty, but a perfected machine, a super-camera —able to give back a selective but always photographic reflection of life.

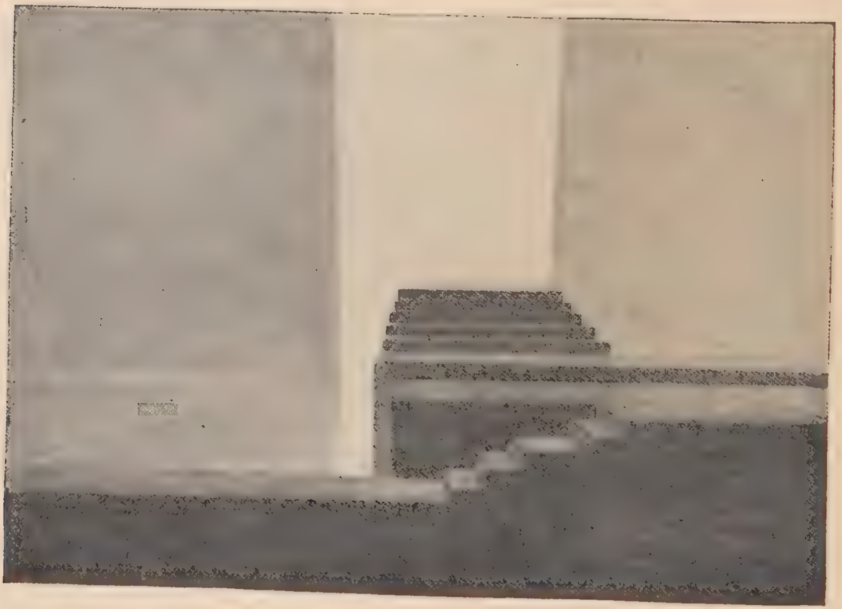
I am not fooling myself into thinking that any little pack of rebels can drive realism from the theatres in any given quarter-century, or even that the gradual trend to a new type of production will make any perceptible difference in the number of realistic plays to be produced on New York's Broadway next season. There will be more counterparts of *The Easiest Way*, *Rain*, *Loyalties* and *The Circle*, even more Shaw, which is really a step upward; more stunts like the transplanted Childs Restaurant, and the elevator's squeak, and the real cabbages, and endless faithful Period interiors, leading-hotel interiors and Harlem interiors; more natural acting, down to the last vulgarity, perfectly faithful to a studied original and perfectly uninspired. There are plenty of times when I think it is right that we should have these things, as we have *The Saturday Evening Post*, baseball and the movies, for our wholesome amusement and shallow comfort (although the movies might be asked to tinker up their wholesomeness a bit). For most of us they are necessary, to take the place of religion and culture. In the absence of anything to be called a modern church, in the absence of any adequate amount of art related to contemporary life, these are at present our relaxation, our relief from the grind of making a living, our substitute of entertainment for spiritual life. But need we insist that they have to do with art?

I suppose that one cannot claim a constructive modernist development for the theatre without pointing out the parallel to the expressive form quality in painting and architecture. I confess that I am even more at a loss for words to suggest what I feel theatric form to be, than I was in the case of the graphic arts back in the chapter on Theoretical Background. Although this is my own art, for I am a worker in the theatre, the essential thing we are after, the essential drama quality, the revelation of spirit that is beyond plot, character, action and ensemble, seems more elusive than the corresponding quality in the other art fields. I have responded to it in divers places: at the culminating emotional moment of a typical story-play, in a cramped Broadway playhouse; in the open air when Margaret Anglin played something of Sophocles in the Greek Theatre at Berkeley; without understanding more than a rare word of the language, when I saw the driving, Expressionistic *Masse-Mensch* production at the *Volksbühne* in Berlin; at rehearsals, at a simple production of *Hamlet*, most recently at moments in the performance of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. What I mean is that at these times there got over to me, a spectator looking at action on a stage, a *spirit* out of the production; a moving, compelling, dynamic thing that stilled my mind, emotionalized my whole being, wrapped me up in ecstasy, that made me belong completely and joyously to the theatre, a sheer dramatic emotion.

Where theatre productions at other times are merely amusement, or entertainments that play pleasant tricks with our surface emotions, these rare productions are profoundly stirring, and they leave one looking back pleasurably, with the thought that *there* all the resources of the stage were combined in one essentially theatric emotion; that the theatre has been used with profound expressiveness—and in that lies the revelation of theatric *form*.

The easiest types of drama to identify as "new" are those that are primarily sensuous in appeal—the wordless productions, swinging away from literature toward music and color, that are sometimes set off in a special category called "æsthetic drama." The best known, and perhaps most successful, examples have been created in some of the "dance-dramas" of Diaghileff's Russian Ballet. Aside from the conjunction with music and dependence upon emotional as against imitative use of line and color in the





TWO STAGE DESIGNS BY ADOLPHE APPIA

Above, a "forest" setting; below, a stage for rhythmic action backgrounds, there is here the central emphasis on movement instead of story—and movement is (thanks very largely to our American Isadora Duncan) in the best modern dancing wholly abstract and expressive.

It would seem at first glance that these Russians, helped sometimes by foremost French painters like Derain and Picasso, have achieved the answer to the question about theatric form. For theirs is a typically and frankly theatric art, inclining toward abstract means, presentative of emotion and rhythm rather than imitative of outward aspects of life, carrying the spectator with certainty into an ecstasy of the senses. And yet, when all is said and done, this very fascinating thing seems to me to lack something of the finest nobility and expressiveness of which the theatre is capable. It tends too far toward the essential qualities of music and dancing as such; there is some finer and wider implication in the word "drama" which it has missed. It is magnificent; but like most magnificent buildings or paintings or sculptures, it is likely to be just a little empty—spiritually. In the joy it gives us sensuously, and in its failure to go deeper, it is perhaps the theatre's counterpart of decorative painting, the stage version of Gauguin's canvases. It is, to be sure, the *completest* thing developed in all the phases of theatric modernism. But the sensuous theatre is not all the theatre, and its half of the modernist stage movement is likely to prove a minor half. The theatre using words as one of its media seems to hold the larger promise of spiritual and formal beauty.

There is great danger, of course, that the theatre will swing too far in the other direction, toward literary values, when the dramatist attempts new creative things away from the primarily sensuous field. For many centuries the greater portion of what is called drama has been predominantly literary, and recently it has been almost exclusively of the shallow fiction type, without the slightest formal beauty—journalistic, literal, unimaginative. One may see that danger, and still believe that drama is as closely related æsthetically to literature as it is to music, dancing or the color arts. For I think there is no way of evading the fact that in dramatic production in its most moving forms, story-development or character-development is a major factor. This need not be plot for its own sake, as the short-story writers use it. It may be the play of divinity shaping a sequence of events, soul brought to soul before our eyes, a reflection in unfolding action of the universal relating rhythm. It may be hardly more than a loose arrangement of improvisations on a certain theme, or it may move as swiftly and inevitably as a Greek tragedy; but the flow, the disposition of events, the unrolling, is of its essential character. We are dealing here with a time art, and it is precisely because words are the most expeditious aid to unfolding the relationships of humanity, because they hasten and intensify the emotional action, that they become a legitimate dramatic means.

In summary, the following elements probably enter into the theatre production's effectiveness in reaching the emotions of the spectator; some sort of crescendo or varied form of action or story, words used tonally as well as literally, re-enforcement of the emotion by designed lighting, background, color and movement, and acting that is less personal than character-revealing—and beyond these, or perhaps implicit in the synthesis of them, some all-over theatrical attribute in the nature of a flowing rhythm.

About three jumps back in theatre history, such minor revolutions as there were, clearly were based on changes in the literary or playwriting element. The "romantic revival" was of that sort. The following phase, the naturalism of the late 19th Century, was likewise more clearly marked in its changing form of play and dialogue than in any other element of theatre art; although it brought about negative changes in acting and scenic background, purging away bombastic-romantic traditions in playing without substituting anything but an ineffective naturalism, and destroying the more negligently artificial elements in decoration in favor of the equally hollow distractions of photographic imitation. In playwriting there were always countercurrents to naturalism; romantic plays as recently as Rostand; symbolic-mystic plays as recently as Maeterlinck; and most important, amounting to a minor revolution in itself, the brilliant intellectual drama of Wilde, Shaw and Barker. No one need sneer at this English school of playwriting just because it failed to achieve formal beauty, and because it narrowed the theatre down to a playground for intellectuals. At that it was infinitely superior to nine-tenths of what passed as theatre art out of the preceding two or three centuries. At least it was intelligent jugglery of ideas, and that is a step ahead of cheap juggling with people's surface emotions, or sentimental-scientific slicing-of-life.

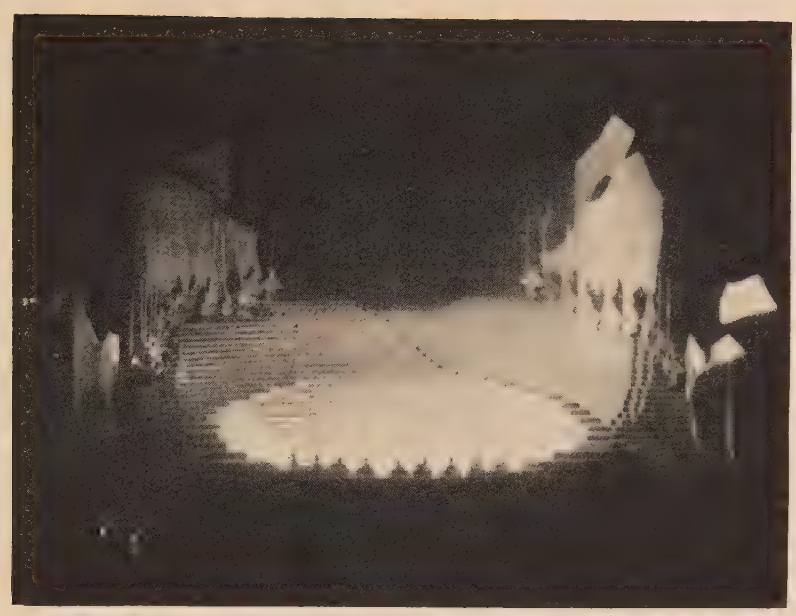
In the theatre there is a special development of realism which perhaps has more to recommend it than the usual realistic painting or sculpture. It almost warrants the name "spiritualized realism." It moves the spectator in something more than a surface way—but it never has that sweep, that dynamic power, that all-enveloping beauty which is embraced in some other types of play. It has found its richest interpretation in the productions of the Moscow Art Theatre under Constantin Stanislavsky, with a group of actors who touch the culminating point in repressed naturalistic acting. Perhaps because these Russians had refined realism down to the last point, the first notable rebellion against naturalistic playwriting, in favor of a more typically *theatric* form, came in Russia, in the experiments of Meyerhold and Yevreynoff. Neither one of these men has given us important plays upon which to build a new type of production. But both contributed to the idea which chiefly underlies later experiment. It is that dramatist and audience must both accept the fact that the theatre is always a theatre, for shows, with an emotional entity of its own, and that to reduce it to a place where playwrights and actors try to afford the illusion of real life, by imitating nature, is a perversion of its function. In that statement is the heart of modern dramatic theory. Meyerhold and Yevreynoff reverted to naked stages, cleared of the accumulation of painted settings and machinery for clever "effects" which the three-hundred-year reign of the realistic-pictorial drama had accumulated; this stripped stage was brought forward as a frankly theatrical element, in order that the actors might be brought forward too and appear frankly as actors—all to the end of re-establishing the long-lost relationship between players and audience that existed in Greek, Mediæval and Elizabethan times. No more looking through a square frame and pretending that it was the removed fourth wall of a room of actual life; no more meticulous representation of nature in the background; no more straining for *illusion.* Dramatists must refuse longer to be bound by the supposed necessity of holding their characters and action within the limits of what might probably and naturally happen in the world as we usually know it; they must feel free to violate any three-act or five-act formula, or any technical limitation of three settings or five or twenty; they must understand only that it is man's soul and emotions and the materials of the theatre that they deal with, and that so long as they project these theatrically, in an unfolding "show," it makes no difference whether they violate the appearances of reality, the limits of the realistic peep-hole stage, or the rules of current playwriting practice. The grasping of the essentially theatric thing is what counts.

Perhaps the original experimenters with this revolutionary, anti-realistic idea worked too doctrinairely, perhaps they simply were not born to be world-masters in their art, or perhaps the chaotic conditions in war-time Russia and post-war Russia have slowed their development—but certainly they have been eclipsed, so far as play texts go, by the so-called Expressionistic playwrights. This group came into world prominence out of Germany in 1920 or 1921, and today their influence has been felt directly by considerable groups of theatre workers wherever revolutionary ideas are welcomed. The Expressionist drama lives up to the suggested parallel with Expressionist painting. It grew out of the same impatience with the nature-serving direction of current art practice, and out of the widespread groping for new expressive forms. It is characterized by the same distortion of the outward aspects of nature, the same disregard for technical formulas and niceties, a similar headlong, emotional approach. The best-known example of the type is Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight,* because it was first translated into English and was later produced in New York (and very briefly in London); and Ernst Toller's *Masse-Mensch* has become a classic example because of its sensational qualities and its long run in Berlin. In New York the presentation of three native Expressionistic plays on Broadway in quick succession, Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*, John Howard Lawson's *Roger Bloomer* and Lawson's *Processional*, early served to familiarize the theatre-going public there with at least the surface characteristics of the method. These five examples have this in common: they are all constructed—thrown together, some people would say—in many short scenes, leaping from crisis to crisis as fast as words and action can carry them, without regard to that intricate formula of preparation, minor climax and third-act climax which has been the respectable superstition of playwriting ever since professors first began to dissect the classic dramatists; they distort ruthlessly the outward aspects of nature, telescoping time, intensifying the emotional "look" of a place to the exclusion of all material detail, caricaturing people; they use words with a new effectiveness, singly, for immediate emotional reaction, without regard to grammatical arrangement—and at the other extreme they pile up words and speeches into avalanches of emotion; and they all are swift, dynamic, abrupt, Whitmanesque. They burst the bounds, too, of the old philosophies and the old divisions of realism, romanticism and symbolism, piling these things in too, if the mixing helps. They are able to compass such a range and to span such chasms because with their first gesture they free themselves of the realistic-naturalistic limitation; because they serve notice at the start that actuality doesn't interest them, and then can plunge along from emotional crisis to emotional crisis without stopping to compromise with plausibility or to make the action seem "natural."

Many of the incidents in *From Morn to Midnight* are utterly implausible, the Fifth Avenue scene in *The Hairy Ape* is, on second thought, laughably artificial, the caricatures of the capitalists in *Masse-Mensch* are outrageously overdrawn; and yet these extremes and abrupt contrasts move us as they are meant to do, and the whole piled-up conglomeration stirs us immensely—so that in the end we are left with a sense of having been lifted to a new height above mankind, of an experience beyond life. Perhaps we are a bit dizzy at first, but when that wears off, the sense of wonder, even exaltation, remains.

I do not think we have a genuine masterpiece in the type yet—no Cezanne or Picasso or Kokoschka of the theatre—but from the production of *Masse-Mensch* particularly I caught gleams of something to come which seems to me most likely to crystallize as our modernist type of production. I see artists building on the intensity, the raw emotion of these plays, a new, virile sort of theatre production, as powerful as modern life, stirring, touching beauty at its most gorgeous and careless moments. It will never try to evade the confession of the stage as stage, it will leap into action at the first bound, compressing the drama of a lifetime into every episode, every moment, packing every speech with a torrent of ideas, laying bare life in the raw; it will not always be smooth and intelligible, and certainly not pretty; but it will act on you like emotional sledge-hammers, it will unaccountably move you and purge your soul like the old Greek dramas (curiously enough, considering our refined and reverent attitude toward classic plays!) and shock you and stir your finest emotions, and outrage your sense of the conventions of polite drama and polite living, but reveal a deeper rhythm, and finally leave you with a feeling of spiritual exaltation. Perhaps the abruptness and shock and noisiness will wear down, so that the intensity and emotional directness and absolute theatricalness will remain, to be mated with those universal qualities of serenity and profoundness which underlie the greatest art.

There will always be great acting if there is great drama in the world. I am convinced that if we have lacked giants among our players in recent generations, it has been because no plays were being produced that called for giants. The acting profession is "down" at the moment, because playwriting has been weak, imitative, unimaginative, even dull. It made no demands beyond clever imitativeness. But here in America we have a remarkable group of young actors, intelligent, forward-looking, emotionally alive, intense with the feel of the times and love of the stage—and most of them are marking time artistically while the "producers" feed them on the pap of decadent realism, dramatized best-seller fiction and sugared classics. There may be modernist acting as distinguished from what we generally have; if so, it is merely a return to real acting, to impersonation, where we have been content with the showing up of personal charm and clever mimicking. When we get the right combination of play and producer, the acting end will be adequately taken care of. What we need is dramatist-producers who can visualize acting as they write. I am reminded again of the unfortunate separation of functions in the theatre as I turn away from both the dramatists and the actors to the stage



MODEL FOR "DANTE," BY NORMAN-BEL GEDDES

decorators, with whom lies the rest of the story of modernism on the stage.

Some people still count David Belasco's revolt against the artificiality of staging in the 'nineties as the beginning of modern producing in America. But his was only a much-needed, but ultimately unimportant, revolution within the field of naturalism. He made naturalism solid, of a *built* rather than a painty sort, but meticulously imitative. After him came the true revolution in stage setting, the decorator who understood something of unity and synthesis, who started first by trying to take the stage away from the playwrights and actors to make it a painter's plaything, but who soon settled down to fill his niche more efficiently than any other

MODEL FOR "DANTE," BY NORMAN-BEL GEDDES

worker in the theatre is filling his; a generation which understands that the only excuse for the decorator on the stage is to help present a play to an audience adequately, appropriately, emotionally, with the visual appeal re-enforcing at every point the appeal of the spoken word and the individual gesture.

The visual appeal *is* important—co-important with the several sorts of appeal that go to make up theatric expressiveness. It is here that we come to Gordon Craig, the great pioneer figure in the changing world theatre. He stands behind these decorators, behind the Russians, and particularly as the great source of inspiration and ideas behind the many German modernist playhouses. His influence is felt wherever the new generation is trying new sorts of production. Back in the time when Craig was a young actor, stage decoration and the visual element in staging were at the lowest ebb. Theatre art was made up of play texts, acting and something that was ordered in from scenic studios. These studios "supplied the art" in accordance with a run-down tradition, in diluted imitation of the grand manner of a century or two earlier, without the faintest notion of harmony of play and setting, of unity of impression, of creative use of line, mass and color. The visual appeal in the theatre was taken care of as an afterthought.

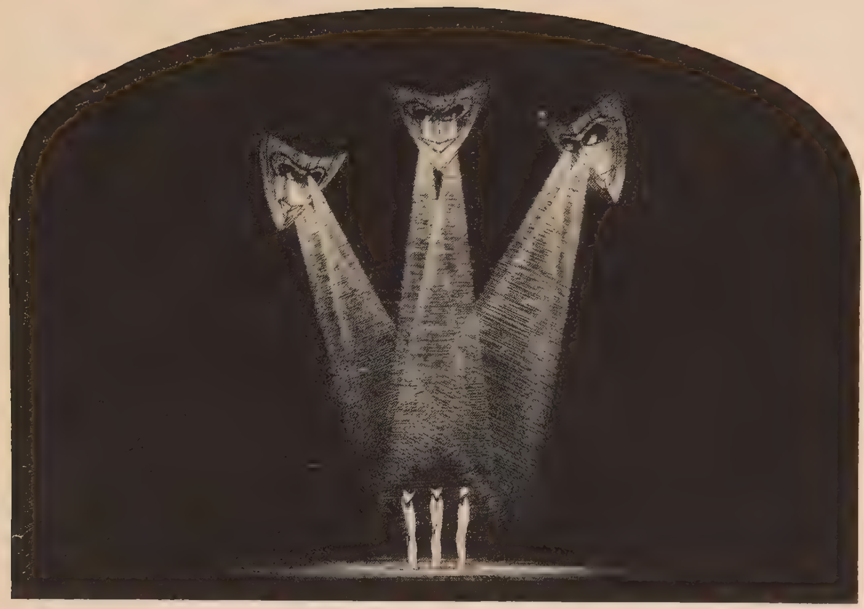
Gordon Craig rediscovered that the theatre is by exact definition first of all "a place for *seeing*"; he has reaffirmed on a thousand occasions the fundamental importance of what can be understood by the spectator through the eye—"the art of the theatre has sprung from action—movement—dance"; and in emphasizing—perhaps over-emphasizing—the importance of the visual element, he once added a memorable note: " . . . not a word about it being a place for hearing 30,000 words babbled out in two hours." It is generally agreed that this rediscovery of Craig's marks a turning-point in the history of the modern theatre. Only by a complete understanding of the multiple nature of theatre art, and its dependence upon movement and visual design as an integral part of its "form," co-ordinate with the appeal to or through the ear, can one get an inkling of the visions that the younger theatre artists have seen. Craig has never proved a great deal by his productions—they have been too few and usually not done freely, independently—but through his provocative writings and his extraordinary designs he has fired the imaginations of theatre workers, from the commercially astute Max Reinhardt to the very "special" Copeau, from the Germans who have put his ideas to constructive work in their greatest theatres to the experimenters in our thousand amateur "little theatres." He was anti-realistic from the start; he implied if he did not directly point out the necessity for a return to the naked stage, the frankly theatrical theatre; he insisted upon a "noble artificiality" as a goal, and he experimented with such "presentative" media as the marionette and the mask—a step toward abstraction; but most of all, he paved the way for the more radical experimenters of today by showing up the lack of unity, the lack of vision, the lack of that synthesis of forces which alone can bring to flower the thing we have called typical theatric form. If he overstated the importance of the visual element, thus driving minor artists to the sin of over-decoration, in the larger view he restored a balance which the theatre had to have before modern progress was possible. One must mention also Adolphe Appia, who likewise wrote and made remarkable and suggestive designs, although his influence was less widespread and his ideas less spectacularly radical. He urged a new unity—a unity that would emphasize the domination of the actor on the stage—and he particularly put forward the truth that there are great emotional values in lighting, even a possible spiritualizing, synthesizing power in light that would go far to weld together the then scattered forces of production. He had a vision of a sort of formal beauty that had been lost out of the theatre for many generations.

That brings us back to the young designers, particularly in the playhouses of Germany and America, who were nurtured on Craig and Appia; for I believe that collectively they have had that vision more clearly than the actors, dramatists or so-called producers, and certainly they have had most to do with the preparation of the actual stage for a new drama. Their revolt accomplished at first merely a becoming re-dressing of the current drama, and strictly speaking had nothing to do with the development of a modernist theatre. To the surviving romantic play they added an eye-filling loveliness of lighting, coloring and general *decors*; and the realistic drama they rescued from a too-studied literalness on the one hand and the old flapping-canvas absurdity on the other. Through practicing the newly-recovered principles of simplicity, suggestion and fitness, they added a new visual dignity to the current drama; for the first time in the memory of the oldest actor, the play was dressed appropriately, richly, honestly, to bring out its own best, if somehow over-familiar, points.

There followed the search for a style in decoration—"stylized" Shakespeare, Viennese-decorative mimo-dramas, atmospheric Maeterlinck, fantastic dolling-up of dream-plays or nightmare plays. But mere betterment of setting, putting old plays in stylish clothes, somehow left a bizarrish feel in the eye. When Cubist and Expressionist modes of painting came in, these were tried on the old girl too—and distracted for the moment, but in the end made her look older than ever. But the young decorators were broad enough to see before anyone else, when the real signs of a new drama arrived, that the carefully studied types of post-Impressionistic "scenery" were inadequate, and they met the dramatist halfway by discarding decoration entirely and striking out for the "formal stage." They cut out background entirely, arranging forestages for the actors to play on, and pools of light for them to play in—to the end that the emotional appeal to the audience might be more direct, the intensity heightened. It would look as if the intelligent decorator had thus done himself out of his job; but it is only the hundredth theatre that has turned even partly modernistic, and on Broadway Jones, Geddes, Simonson, Rosse, Bragdon, Thompson and Peters can still find plenty to do in the field of dressing realism or romanticism prettily; and the more imaginative of them are turning producers or dreamers of complete productions and of new theatres to house them.

Robert Edmond Jones probably divined the thing that was developing in world art, the shift to a search for form, earlier than any other artist in the American theatre. His designs for purely "formal" productions are among the finest thrusts toward a new stage art. One of his conceptions was that "Expressionist production of Macbeth" which went so sadly wrong in the acting, but which at its best moments afforded New York audiences occasional vistas into an almost unexplored field of abstract beauty. His "settings" cast loose from reality, they were not meant to be even "suggestive" of palace rooms, heaths, etc., they were not symbolic (although many a spectator read symbolism into the leaning "arches" or "windows"); they were conceived as intensifying, abstractly, the feeling of dread that hangs over the play. So far as settings alone can go, Jones there initiated Expressionism into the larger American theatre. And he has greater formal projects visualized but as yet unrealized on the stage.

Without doubt the most imaginative and most fecund of American modernists in the theatre is Normal-Bel Geddes, who has designed many theatres for radical types of production, and who has made extraordinary plans for a presentation of a *Dante* play.



OPENING SCENE IN "MACBETH," BY ROBERT EDMOND JONES

These require the building of a special stage, the synthesis of all the elements commonly associated with mimo-drama—music, rhythmic movement in mass and individually, color accompaniment—with the poetry and the unfoldment of events of the profounder word-drama, and the services of perhaps a thousand actors (or slaves). The photographs shown here, from Geddes' model, indicate the unusualness, and perhaps suggest something of the beauty, potential in the scheme. I think that Geddes and Jones, and perhaps all the artists I named in a paragraph above, would agree that the theatre to which we are coming (ultimately) depends for its form on a developing type of drama; and that the outward mark of that drama is a frank theatricality, a confessed employment of the means that are typically the theatre's, total abandonment of the realistic illusion, of photographic exactness, of representation of life as an end in itself. Its inward content is not life imitated, but life condensed, formalized, shaped into a performance by the intensification and liberation of emotion in theatric form. It is thus not representative, illustrative, descriptive, but expressive, presentative, creative.

It is fairly easy for the historian to go and see manifestations of the new creativeness in painting, sculpture and architecture, wherever they may be. Those works are fixed and permanent. Progress in the theatre art, however, is marked by productions that are brought to fruition, perhaps in obscure places, and then pass. One must judge by chance opportunities to see "masterpieces" or by averages and experiments. To summarize the practical and concrete progress toward a new art of the theatre is therefore doubly difficult and hazardous.

Russia has the most vigorous, alive and forward-looking theatre in the world. The country fairly seethes with dramatic experiment, in folk theatres, children's theatres, professional theatres. The advance is difficult to appraise in some departments, particularly playwriting. It is a popular notion outside that the drama has been prostituted to communist propoganda. But those who have seen the thing from the inside say that this absolute identification of playwriting with the problems and crises through which the people are living is really an approach to a religious drama, in the Greek sense. However that may be—and here the revolution in art perhaps waits upon the complete attainment of a new spiritual basis for living—there are other aspects in which the Soviet theatres are obviously the most modern. The stagecraft goes farthest toward utilizing creatively all the intensely theatrical means. The settings are largely in the structural mode called Constructivist, with great stress laid upon varied levels for acting. Music, dance and pantomime are freely woven into the dramatic fabric. Movement has become so important a part of the theatric "flow" that every actor in Russia must study not only dance but acrobatics. Among artist-directors Meyerhold is still most talked of, perhaps still most daring; but in Moscow alone there are also the Kamerny Theatre and the Vachtangov Theatre, both offering productions so "advanced" that they would be outstanding in any city outside the Soviet Union.

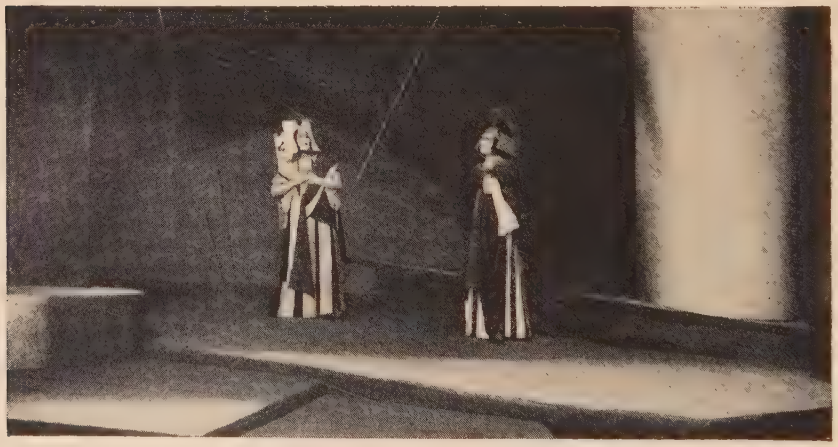
With a more conservative sort of modernism, the German theatres are serving their audiences more practically and more richly than any other. The Expressionistic trend in playwriting brought the drama part way out of the old obsession with realism; and the influence of Craig and Appia led German "decorators" to simplify the setting, and to develop extraordinary lighting equipment, so that a play or opera in the leading theatres of any one of a score of cities is likely to prove a feast to the eye. The German artists have proved themselves less imaginative than the Americans, Geddes and Jones, but they have had greater opportunity to practice to the full extent of their talents, at the state and municipal theatres, and under such enlightened directors as Jessner and Reinhardt. The Volksbühne, a socialistic theatre in Berlin, has advanced not only in stage experiment but as a pioneer workingmen's theatre, owned by its audience. But the eyes of students everywhere turn toward Germany chiefly because of the *general* advance evident there, toward rounded-out theatricalism in production under visionary artist-directors. Nowhere else are you so likely to find glimpses of the integrated flow of movement, color, words, lights, pantomime—the means of the art manipulated richly for the expressive theatric form value.

In France the vision of a new theatre was early experienced by Jacques Copeau, who was fired by the writings and designs of Craig. Copeau directed a pioneer experimental theatre in Paris, the *Vieux Colombier*, and produced a long series of plays on a non-pictorial, architectural stage. Many an old drama took on fresh theatrical life when presented on his undisguised platform; but in the end he gave up his Paris theatre without having turned up any contemporary play scripts to fit his modern formal stage and his frankly theatrical acting. He retired to the provinces to begin his work farther back, in a fresh social relationship with the community. Meanwhile some members of his first company—most notably Louis Jouvet—carry on the rather halting experimental work that is France's contribution to "the new movement."

Here in the United States there is extraordinary amateur and semi-professional experiment toward newer stage methods. Perhaps one thousand, perhaps two thousand "little theatres" are functioning under varying sorts of progressive ideals. A few of the pioneer groups contributed to the development of an ultimate native "art theatre"; the Provincetown Players by offering a haven to the early and sometimes immature work of the more daring playwrights, including Eugene O'Neill; the Chicago Little Theatre, under Maurice Browne, by trial of unorthodox production methods; the Neighborhood Playhouse of New York by pioneering in ritualistic masque, dance-drama, and other by-ways. Recently the organizations grown out of such insurgency have become firmly established: the Theatre Guild in New York, the Cleveland Playhouse, the Pasadena Community Theatre, the Dallas Little Theatre, and many others. There still is no theatre as notably a center of the creative stage art as was the 291 Gallery in the field of painting, and certainly no American theatre director as important as Stieglitz. Progress has been made piecemeal, as in a half dozen stylized productions at the Chicago Little Theatre between 1912 and 1917, in the Provincetown productions of *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape,* in the Actors' Theatre production of *Roger Bloomer,* in the Pasadena production of *Lazarus Laughs,* and in the Theatre Guild production of *Processional.*

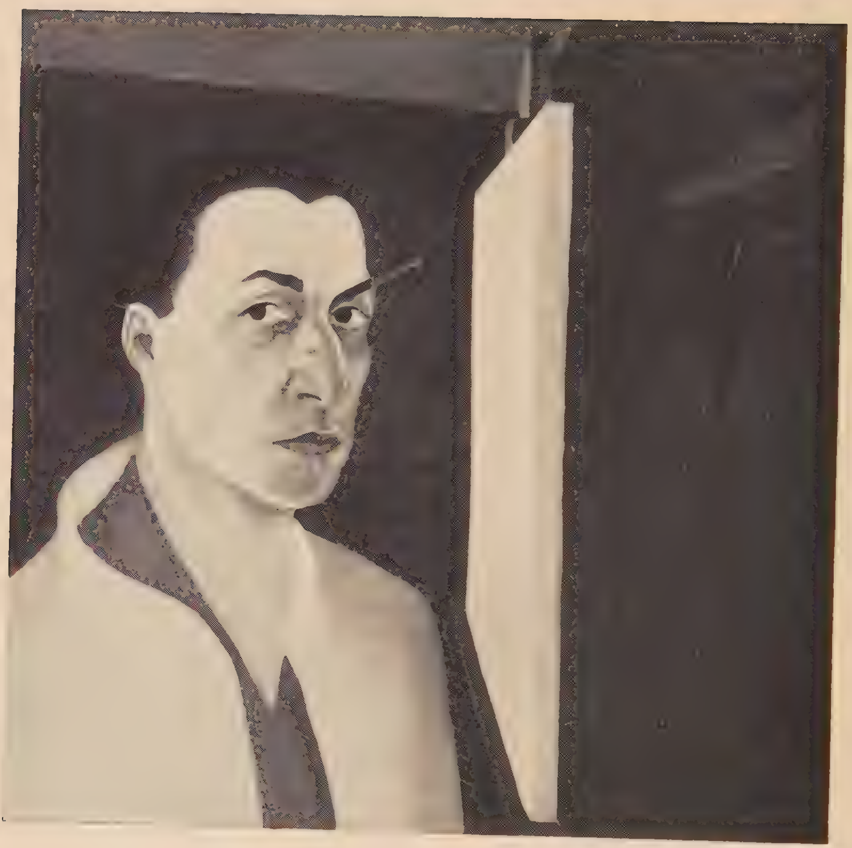
The Theatre Guild is the nearest American approach to what has been called in continental Europe "the art theatre." It has been content in general to assist in the perfecting of realism, with frequent excursions into Shavian intellectualism, and in these fields it has achieved an enviable standard of visual production under the guidance of Lee Simonson. But the Guild also has produced the less usual plays, sometimes downright Expressionistic, of the ablest native playwrights: Eugene O'Neill, Philip Barry, John Howard Lawson, Elmer Rice, Paul Green and Maxwell Anderson. The Guild is firmly settled, a "commercial success," and its service to modernism in the future need be limited only by the vision of its directors. Meantime some of the artists who have been foremost in experimental progress in the past—Sam Hume, Irving Pichel—have gone out into other fields of activity because living is precarious on the road to the theatrical future. The most original genius of them all, Norman-Bel Geddes, working at infrequent intervals as an independent producer, has afforded glimpses of a new intensity of theatricalism, in his productions of *Arabesque, Jehanne d'Arc, Lysistrata,* and *Hamlet.* He should have a permanent theatre of his own, but of course the poverty-stricken American people can hardly afford to endow a genius like Geddes.

In any case it seems clear that the future lies in the direction of the frankly theatrical stage (in its several types of architectural or sculptural stage, "space stage," or Constructivist stage); in the direction of the anti-realistic artist-director, shaping all the means of the theatre into one formal "flow"; and in the direction of the Expressionistic dramatist, piling up theatrical-emotional intensity, without too great respect for photographic nature. Even now one may occasionally sit in an auditorium and give up to an emotion as profoundly stirring, æsthetically, as that evoked by a Matisse painting, or the downtown skyscrapers of New York, or Lehmbruck's sculpture.



SCENE FROM *PHEDRE* AS PRODUCED AT THE KAMERNY THEATRE, MOSCOW

AFTERWORD



SELF-PORTRAIT, BY H. M. DAVRINGHAUSEN

AFTERWORD

IT has been my hope, in thus spreading out a selective panorama of modern art, and particularly in adding chapters about architecture and the theatre, that I might afford the reader a hint of the breadth and of a certain unity of what is vaguely called "the movement." I have tried to mark out its general direction, and to suggest its surface complexion. My plan was to trace it from the time when it stemmed from the drying-up main current of "the great tradition"—when it accomplished its immediate revolt from Impressionism and turned its direction directly away from realism—to the confused and confusing present.

I have been hard put to accomplish any sort of simplification of this "modernist" current, to get it down to ponderable terms; for it is probably true that if we are to discuss art at all (and I still have grave doubts about any virtue in that activity), we must strip it to principles, tendencies and currents that the mind can get hold of; but truer still that the heart of æsthetics lies beyond regions open to the active mind, the essence of creative appreciation beyond study and thought. Only by violating the essential thing that is art, can one be concerned to analyze it, chart it, or introduce anyone to its least manifestation.

By way of atoning for this violence to the deeper reality, by way of restoring a needed balance or unconcernedness, I wish to call attention here at the end, as I did in my Foreword, to the importance of keeping the border-lines fluid, of widening or freeing appreciation rather than narrowing critically to a formula. I am alarmed lest some reader may carry away an impression of rolling

Cezannish form, or geometrical near-abstraction, or Expressionistic intensity, as the big and only test of truly modern art, going forth to enjoy obediently or damn mercilessly in accordance with a principle. I stumble upon a painting like this self-portrait by Davringhausen, and ask myself with misgiving whether I have kept my definitions wide enough to include it, in spirit, in one chapter or another. I drift into Stephan Bourgeois' gallery to enjoy the quiet, child-like things there, and wonder how far I may have over-emphasized modernistic intenseness. I ponder on the diversity of richness, in both painting and sculpture, in the extraordinary collection of John Quinn, and I wonder whether it is possible to sketch out a current or a period in terms that will do justice to all that must be included.

In short, I not only am at a loss here for words to summarize my book, but feel only the urge to free the reader from any "set" notions about modern art that I may have imparted. I hope that I may have put him somewhat more at ease in the presence of "new" painting, sculpture or architecture. Perhaps he will trust more to his emotions—and if there are enough of him, that may be a considerable blessing. But let him browse in diverse fields, let him put up no fences, let him find new eyes æsthetically.

And yet one dogmatic fact stands out—one negative principle seems to be back of everything I have talked about, seems to afford a starting-point, to comprise a summary: *modern art is anti-realistic.* If we were not still in a preponderantly realistic era, it would be unnecessary to repeat that statement. But because one is so surrounded, in museums, in homes, in magazines, with primarily imitative art, one needs to get a glimpse of the havoc wrought by realism through four centuries, and a release from that obsession, before one can enjoy one's own emotions freely.

When I came to New York six or seven years ago I happened upon the landscape by Cezanne in the Metropolitan Museum. I don't remember that it particularly impressed me in an emotional way at first; but as I visited the Museum time after time, the painting grew upon my consciousness until it spoke to me more clearly, more movingly, than any other picture in the post-Rembrandt rooms. That one painting came near to accomplishing, alone, the revolution in my own art faith. The pleasure I found in it—not even one of Cezanne's best in achievement, but full of his striving for "realization"—came nearer to setting things right with me in art appreciation than anything else I had experienced. The miles of surrounding paintings began to look very obvious, to confess themselves for what they were, works of illustration, faithfully exact, prettily colored and technically impressive.

The lack of other modern works in the Museum—so that I looked to the Cezanne corner as the culmination of each visit—may have served to emphasize the thing that lies beyond the surface, may have intensified the emotional appeal. There, so far as painting was concerned, I found new eyes. I was not chasing theories; the canvas simply spoke to me, emotionally, expressively, intensely, joyously. The only thing I had to fit me for the experience was a wholesome dissatisfaction with imitative, realistic art.

No one can explain exactly the mystery of personal æsthetic appreciation. But I am sure that once you get some conception of what you have cut yourself off from by insisting upon the imitative canon in art—what regions of pure emotional joyousness you have foregone—you will find a new freedom of appreciation coming upon you, and works like this painting of Cezanne's, or Davies' prints, or Wright's architecture, or an Expressionistic drama like *Masse-Mensch*, speaking to you, bringing forgetfulness of your mind and your body, putting you into an ecstasy of the spirit. We have been through literal, materialistic times. But I have faith that spirituality constantly is reborn into the world. Our children ordinarily have it, until we drive it out of them by way of "fitting them for the world." The artist has it in greater measure than other people; but he too has been driven to a conformity, a compromise with the literal world, for some centuries past. Modern art seems to me to be a sign that we are getting back to an appreciation of the spiritual-emotional element in life: the artists' anti-literal, emotionally expressive activity, amounting to a spiritual overflow, is no less eloquent of the change than is the increasing receptiveness, the fast widening appreciation on the part of a "public." The cycle is almost complete: we have got almost back to that point where the recurring spirituality is conserved, where emotion is valued, where æsthetic experience is recognized as valid in its own right, without reference to naturalness, sweetness, etc. What we need most, to get over the rest of the circle, is a background of open-mindedness.

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No book can be offered with the assurance that it affords the best introductory approach to modern art; and it is difficult even to judge what may be considered "standard" works ten years hence. The subject is so bound up in experimentation and controversy that the student must make up his mind to read open-mindedly a number of books that occasionally contradict one another, that present widely varied interpretations of the phenomena of modernism. For the purposes of promoting open-mindedness, the following volumes should, perhaps, head the list:

The Art in Painting, by Albert C. Barnes (2nd edition, revised and enlarged), New York, 1928. 115 illustrations.

Understanding Modern Art, by Morris Davidson, New York, 1931. 55 illustrations.

History of Art, Volume IV: Modern Art, by Elie Faure, translated by Walter Pach, New York, 1924. Profusely illustrated. (Useful for study of French modernism only.)

Evolution in Modern Art: A Study of Modern Painting, 1870-1925, by Frank Rutter, London, 1926. 35 illustrations.

The Modern Movement in Art, by R. H. Wilenski, London, 1927. 32 illustrations.

Less a factual record, but very suggestive and interesting, is *Foundations of Modern Art,* by [Amedée] Ozenfant, translated by John Rodker, New York, 1931. It is profusely illustrated.

A simple and understandable essay at a modern æsthetic will be found in *Art,* by Clive Bell, London, 1920. The student who goes beyond the first group of introductory books should seek out Bell's *Since Cezanne,* London, 1922. He will find useful and suggestive also Roger Fry's volumes of essays entitled *Vision and Design,* revised edition, London, 1925, and *Transformations,* New York, 1927.

There are a number of important studies of individual painters; among them stands high *Cezanne: A Study of His Development*, by Roger Fry, New York, 1927. The several series of separate studies put out by the Museum of Modern Art, The Arts (Magazine), and The Museum of American Art, all in New York, are in general well illustrated and authoritative. Dealing with modern painting in the United States alone, there is the incomplete but important volume by Samuel Kootz, entitled *Modern American Painters*, New York, 1930.

Of works on sculpture, there are two volumes by Stanley Casson, *XXth Century Sculpture*, Oxford, 1930, and *Some Modern Sculptors*, Oxford, 1928, which will prove useful (though it seems to me that the author has no real conception of what constitutes modern sculpture). A large collection of illustrations, practically without text, will be found in an expensive volume entitled *Modern Architectural Sculpture*, edited by W. Aumonier, London, 1930. Among the best monographs are *Eric Gill*, by Joseph Thorp, New York, 1929; and *Epstein*, by Bernard Van Dieren, London, 1925.

In the field of architecture I can recommend, as a bird's-eye view—if only for its 389 pictures—my own *The New World Architecture*, New York, 1930. The best summary of modernism in the theatre arts is still *The Theatre of Tomorrow*, by Kenneth Macgowan, New York, 1921. In the field of "applied decoration" the student will find suggestive *New Dimensions: The Decorative Arts of Today in Words and Pictures*, by Paul T. Frankl, New York, 1928.

I have listed here merely the more elementary and more accessible works in English. The extensive literature in German and French is as yet unlisted by American and British bibliographers, so far as I know.

S. C.

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